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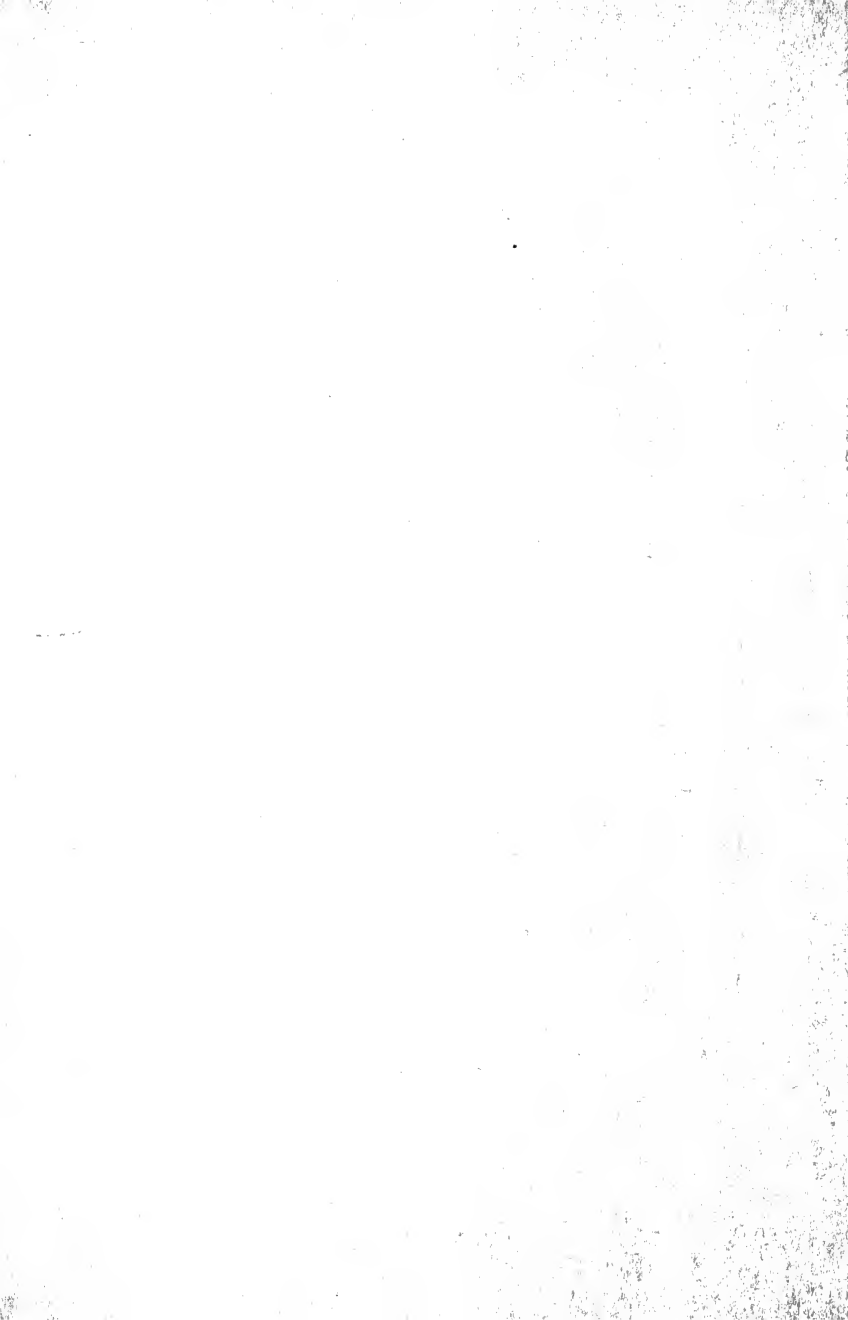
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A STREET IN ATHENS. PAGE 40.



PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

GREECE

BY

EDITH A. BROWNE

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

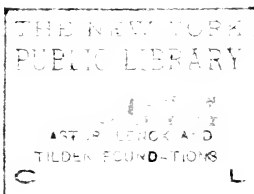
BY

EDWARD H. FITCHEW AND
JOHN FULLEYLOVE, R.I.

LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1909



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MUFFET

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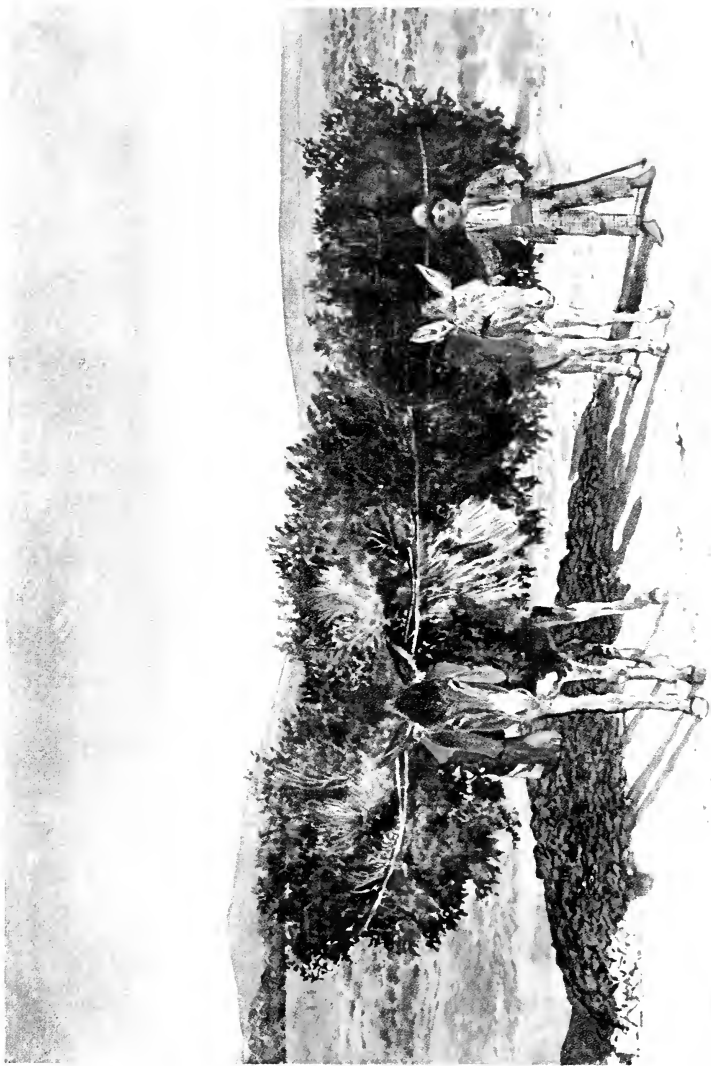
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SKETCH-MAP OF GREECE.



DONKEYS LADEN WITH BRUSHWOOD.

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GREECE

CHAPTER I

AN ENCHANTED LAND

AWAY down in a Southern sunny corner on the other side of Europe there rises from the blue waters of the Mediterranean the land which we call Greece.

You already know this country as a wonderland that used to be the home of a noble race of heroes. The Heroic Age lasted for about two hundred years, and this is the once-upon-a-time epoch to which you owe some of your favourite stories. Then it was that Perseus slew the gorgon, Hercules performed his twelve famous labours, Theseus killed the Minotaur, Jason led the Argonauts in the Golden Fleece adventure, and Ulysses took Troy by the wooden horse stratagem.

The Trojan War marks the end of the Heroic Age. And now we come to a time, about three thousand years ago, when men began to rule over Greece. Four great tribes—Achæans, Dorians, Ionians, and Æolians—entered into a struggle for supremacy, and so rampant was the spirit of rivalry for possession of the land that the principal competitors not only fought against each other, but were divided against themselves. In spite of this political strife, all the tribes were gradually drawn

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together, so that they became one people, while at the same time they formed many independent States. Even under the disruptive conditions of clashing ambitions and inter-State jealousies this union of the tribes into a nation is not surprising, for, as they all traced their descent to one father, Hellen, they naturally looked on one another as brothers. Moreover, they spoke the same language and worshipped the same gods. Hence there were three very strong ties to knit them together.

The time came when all these people began to call themselves by a national name—Hellenes; and to emphasize their homogeneity still further, they spoke of all other nations collectively as “barbarians.” Their native land was also given a name which proclaimed their pride of race—Hellas—and they were soon using this name to signify any and every district inhabited by Hellenes. As the Hellenes were daring adventurers and enterprising colonists, Hellas grew to embrace numerous islands off the homeland coast and in neighbouring waters, great cities in Asia Minor and on the shores of the Black Sea, extensive districts in Italy and Sicily, part of the north coast of Africa, together with a trading-centre in Egypt, and settlements as far west even as France and Spain.

The most formidable foreign enemies to challenge the power of Hellas were the Persians, and in the course of checking their invasions the Hellenes won two of the most famous battles in the world's history—the Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.), and the naval Battle of Salamis (480 B.C.). About a century and a half later Alexander the Great, as supreme General of Hellas, completely turned the tables by challenging the Persian Power. *En route* to the enemy's camp he brought Egypt to his

An Enchanted Land

feet, and founded the famous city of Alexandria, which was named after him ; then, having subdued the Persians, he extended his conquests to Northern India. But on his death in 323 B.C. Alexander's great Empire was split up. Meanwhile a new authority was asserting itself in the West. Rome was fast growing strong enough to dispute with Hellas for the position of supreme European Power. After considerably undermining the colonial strength of Hellas, the Romans succeeded in making the mother-country a Roman province in 146 B.C., and they altered her name to Greece.

As the heart of Hellas, we again find Greece an enchanted land. Its gods, who dwelt on Mount Olympus, must have laid it under the spell of genius, for there is no other reason to explain why so many great men should have been born in one country at one particular period. Many were the warriors, statesmen, philosophers, poets, dramatists, sculptors, and builders who were destined to win fame not only in their own day, in their own land, but for all time in every civilized land. By the force of intellect and the power to create beautiful things the Hellenes developed a remarkably highly cultured civilization, which they spread throughout the length and breadth of their domains. And although their political supremacy was overthrown by the Romans, artistically and intellectually their power endured in the influence they exerted on their conquerors, and through them on European civilization in general. Moreover, through the mediums of their marvellous literature, beautiful buildings, and unrivalled sculpture, that power still exists as an important factor in modern culture.

Greece

But you must not imagine that the fascination of Greece springs entirely from a glorious past. There is a Modern Greece—a country which would still be a veritable land of delights even were it despoiled of all its old associations and ancient treasures. I am not going to play the part of robber chief; I merely want you to feel, before we go any farther together, that we are not going to talk about Greece as it was, but to see Greece as it is. First, however, let me tell you a little about the people who have made it possible for us to travel about this country without taking our lives in our hands at every step.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Greece had been in the hands of the Turks for nearly four hundred years. The tyranny of these foreign masters had reduced both country and people to a sorry plight, and it seemed as though poverty and oppression had hurled the sons of a great and noble race into a hopeless state of slavery. Then suddenly amidst all the desolation and despair the spirit of old Hellas rose up, bidding the Modern Greeks throw off their yoke, inspiring them with the desire to break their fetters. Pride of race, love of freedom, devotion to country, and passion for adventure were rekindled in their hearts, and through their veins coursed the life-blood of the heroes and the Hellenes, driving them to action. In 1821 they rose in arms to fight to the death a War of Independence; by 1830 they had won their liberty, and Greece was declared an independent and sovereign kingdom.

In their struggle with the Turks the Greeks were not only an oppressed people fighting against tyranny, but a Christian people waging war against Mohammedanism.

An Enchanted Land

Both reasons for revolt gained European sympathy for the Greek cause, and eventually European forces were sent to aid the revolutionaries. In the battle which struck the great blow that did so much to set Greece free, the naval battle of Navarino in 1827, it was an allied force of English, French, and Russians that destroyed the Turkish fleet.

Whenever I hear the name of this battle I always think of one friend in particular among the many friends I made when I was in Greece.

It was my first morning in Athens—almost my first day in Greece. I was ploughing my way through the dust up the Acropolis Hill, when suddenly a voice broke in on the stillness :

“Mornin’, missis. You English ?”

“A beggar,” I said to myself, as a sideway glance discovered the spectacle of a ragged-looking man. I could not quicken my pace, for the road was rough and steep, the sun was blazing fiercely overhead, and had already thoroughly scorched the air, even though the morning was still very young ; so I looked straight ahead and plodded on.

Again the voice rang out :

“Mornin’, missis. Why you not speak to me ? You not English ?”

There was something in the tone that made me turn round. My beggar was looking disappointed.

“What is it ?”

The next moment I was regretting that I had spoken brusquely, for as the man took off his hat and came towards me, I saw his eyes dancing with joy.

“English !—I knew so. Forgive me. I am so happy

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to see you. I am Greek—born here—mother Greek, father Greek, but his father's mother English. My grandfather fought side by side with the English at the Battle of Navarino. Your country has been very good to my country. I love the English ; I love you. May I give you a bunch of grapes ?”

Setting down his basket, he moved the vine-leaf covering aside, and drew out a large golden cluster from a rich golden mass.

“ If you please,” he begged to give, as he handed me the fruit. Then he wished me “ Good-mornin’,” and went his way.

CHAPTER II

HOW DAME NATURE FASHIONED GREECE

IN the making of Greece Nature played some of her most delightful pranks, and indulged in many of her wildest freaks. Taking a little piece of the European mainland for material, she used the sea in carving zigzags and curves, so as to give it a remarkably long and very quaintly winding outline. At one time she had an idea of cutting the country right through into two pieces ; but she changed her mind at the last minute, and left the nearly finished island in the south in the form of a peninsula, joined to a northern peninsula by a narrow bridge.

Nearly all round the outline she martialled mountains in semicircular array, making the sea look as though it were fringed with large, richly scalloped shells cast ashore

How Dame Nature Fashioned Greece

by mighty waves, and tilted up side by side at varying angles. And within this borderland of rugged splendour she put giants to work and play. They exploded subterranean mines, so that the earth quaked and was rent asunder, great masses being hurled high into the air, leaving yawning caverns into which other great masses tumbled helter-skelter. In this way the inland region became divided up into small mountain-girdled plains, each isolated from its neighbours by circle behind circle of humpbacked hills, sheer precipices, and frowning peaks.

There was not sufficient room on the lowlands for a river to grow, but some of the torrents that rushed down the mountain-sides, flung themselves over precipices, and burrowed their way across the hills, at last managed to meet each other on the plains. Here they united to form streams, which hollowed out a winding valley in their determined effort to reach the sea. The fertile plains gave birth to vegetation, which foretold the luxuriant crops they would produce under cultivation. The hills, too, in some regions were decked with woods and clothed with forests, but most of the plains were encircled by stony uplands and rocky heights on which nothing could take root. You will not be surprised to hear that while the giants chose the wild mountains as their habitation, the woods and forests were inhabited by nymphs and fairies.

But Nature was not content with the ups and downs and the twistings and turnings of a mainland Greece. Her forces were called into action to make patchwork of the surrounding sea. When they had finished their work, the ocean was studded with islands. On the

Greece

western coast, in the waters known as the Ionian Sea, the islands were scattered, so that they were some little distance apart; but in the Ægean Sea, on the eastern side, they formed a continuous group, or archipelago. And to lend still greater variety to the pattern of Greece, circles of mountains were thrown up in the open waters, so that in many places the sea looked like a succession of mountain-girdled lakes.

Since the days when Greece was first fashioned, earthquakes have wrought havoc among the plains; have altered, and are constantly altering, the shape of mountains and the size of islands; have added a detail here, and completely wiped out another there. Man, too, has cut down many of the old woods and destroyed some of the ancient forests. But, generally speaking, Greece in shape and form is now as it ever was—a magnificent piece of natural patchwork. You have only to see the country to be quite sure that giants still stalk the inaccessible heights and rove in the shadowland of the mighty abysses, while fairies play on the sunny slopes and weave spells in the woodland dells.

Besides the charm of design, Greece has the fascination of colour. The principal note in the colour-scheme is blue. On a fine day—and fine days are a rule, with few exceptions—the sky is royal blue, the sea is sapphire blue, and the land has some tinge of blue in nearly all its lights and shades. The mountain-tops flash silver; on their bare, rugged sides bright silver-grey patches shine among blue-grey, grey-blue, and indigo shadows. The luxuriant little plains below have a carpet of a variegated green groundwork, toned to a soft hue by the bluish-green tint of numerous olive-groves, and the

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STUDY



How Dame Nature Fashioned Greece

chief colour of the decorative pattern of crops is the rich purple of the vineyards when the harvest is ripe.

Greece has yet another means of working her spell of enchantment. The air is so remarkably clear that you can see for miles around, and in the wonderful views you get from the plains up and around the mountains, and from the hill-tops down to the plains below, even far-distant details are plainly visible. That summit away on your horizon is not capped with a hazy mass that might be trees or possibly houses ; it is encircled by walls and crowned with temples. Obviously you are looking far across at an acropolis, the citadel of an old Greek town. But as the quality of the air enables you to see so much at one time, there is all the more reason why you should be prepared for a moment when you will suddenly be plunged into a darkness in which you cannot see an inch before your nose. There is no twilight in this country, and even the highways without the towns have no lamps ; so if you happen to be wending your way from village to village after sunset you will have to put one foot before the other very warily. Until the night-lights are lit in the sky, you will not be able to see whether the next step is going to help you forward on your stony path or carry you over a precipice. Presently I will tell you about an adventure I had on a night when there was no moon, and when not even a star came out to guide me up the steep ascent to my journey's end.

Among all the blessings with which Nature has endowed Greece, her wealth of sunshine is a very precious gift. On the lower slopes of the mountains and on the plains the summer is very long and very hot. In many

Greece

parts hardly any rain falls between March and September—sometimes not even a drop. Most of the streams dry up and the grass withers; even the sun-loving crops run the risk of being spoiled, for although they are not greedy for moisture, there are times when they want a little more than the very few drops they get. On the other hand, when winter sets in, Jack Frost hardly ever does any damage. Snow occasionally falls, but the short season between one summer and the next is usually mild, and warm rain comes to water the land.

Up in the mountains there is rain even in the summer, but most of the peasants are away down in the sunshine then, working in the vineyards; and even though they must be prepared for snow when they go back to their homes, they will not have long to look forward to before sunshine-time comes again. And no one lives on the very high mountains, where it is biting cold, and where the snow sometimes lies till the middle of June.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERN GREEKS

THE Greeks of to-day are naturally very proud of being able to trace their descent to the Hellenes. True, there are some of them who number barbarians amongst their ancestors, for during the Middle Ages a great many Slavs settled in the country; but in spite of the Slavonic influence with which they were brought into contact, the mediæval Greeks managed to retain their national char-

The Modern Greeks

acteristics, and hand them down as an inheritance to their children.

A small proportion of the present population certainly consists of Albanians ; but the Albanians were the stanch allies of the Greeks in the War of Independence, and they won for themselves the right to be recognized as a vital part of the new Greece to which that war gave birth.

There are also a few Roumanians living in Northern Greece. The Greeks say that the bold, bad brigands, whose daring outrages brought the entire country into disgrace not so very long ago, were nearly all members of this nomad tribe. The last time the brigands of Greece made heyday was in 1870, when they captured and shot an Italian and three Englishmen.

Now you will understand why, in thinking of Modern Greece as a nation, you must not forget the Albanians and Roumanians ; but, above all, you must remember that the population consists mainly of people who have an hereditary right to the honoured family name of Greek.

You will, I am sure, be interested to hear all about the daily life of the Greeks, for it is so very different from anything you are used to at home.

First let me tell you what kind of clothes these people wear. They have adopted the Albanian costume as the Greek national dress, and in consequence this is the quaint and picturesque figure of a man that you are constantly meeting : From his waist hangs a very full white kilt, below which are short breeches. His legs are gay with high red gaiters, and his feet are encased in bright red shoes, which curl up at the toes, each into

Greece

a point ornamented with a big black woollen pompon. His white shirt has a soft tucked front and full sleeves ; it looks very much like an elaborate nightshirt. Round his waist he wears a leathern girdle. In front of this belt bulges a pouch, which discovers the protruding hilt of a sheath-knife, the while it shelters, maybe, a hunk of bread for the murderous-looking weapon to dissect, and, still more likely, a handkerchief and some grimy slips of paper which pass for money in the land. Over his shirt he wears a richly embroidered bolero, and he may be carrying on one arm and shoulder his equally richly embroidered, open-sleeved, blue or red coat. A red fez, with a long blue tassel pressed down on one side, hugs his head and completes his outdoor attire. Picture the man old or young, as you like, but let him have good features, a sun-burnt face, and a well-proportioned figure ; above all, stamp him with dignity from the crown of his fez to the curled-up toes of his shoes, and your picture is complete.

You will frequently notice variations of this costume. For instance, a straw hat is sometimes worn instead of a fez, or a coloured handkerchief is knotted about the head ; and while one man favours gaiters, another prefers stockings gartered below the knee with a coloured band, which has festoons of cords and tasselled ends. But these little differences of detail are too slight to rob the whole dress of its national character. This costume is worn by many of the peasants and by several battalions of soldiers.

Here, again, is a man dressed in another kind of costume, which you will often see. There is nothing remarkable about his cotton trousers. Their roomy cut

The Modern Greeks

and well-worn appearance merely proclaim that their owner is a workman. But look at his coat. Have you ever before seen a labourer wearing anything quite so funny and pretty? The material is ordinary small-checked print, which has been soap-sudded and sun-tinted from navy and white to old-china and milky blue. The design of this everyday garment is artistic, and many are the stitches that have gone to its making. It fits down to the waist, where it is confined within a narrow band. Below hangs a full frill like a short skirt. Both back and front of the upper part are put into a yoke. The front has a succession of little tucks, neck-to-waistband long, and running at right angles to them are double rows of stitching at intervals of about two inches between each pair. The full sleeves are tucked from the shoulder downwards for a few inches, and at the wrist they are gathered into a cuff, which is a band of tiny tucks intersected by numerous rows of stitching.

And here is another labourer. This one favours a fancy dress of Turkish origin. On his feet are buckled shoes. His legs are bare, but his baggy dark-blue cotton knickers hang well below his knees. His short jacket is also dark in colour, but his red vest strikes a bright note of contrast, and makes him stand out as a most decorative figure in the lapis-lazuli landscape or amethyst seascape.

Most of the women you meet are dressed in a very ordinary short cotton skirt and blouse style. Generally speaking, they are not so extraordinarily handsome as to attract special attention, and you mostly linger to look at them because they are doing things which probably you have never seen women doing before—washing

Greece

clothes in a narrow stream, with the pebbles for a scrubbing-board; breaking stones by the roadside; or riding to market on a mule amidst piled-up panniers of figs, grapes, peaches, and nectarines. But sometimes you find yourself losing sight of strange doings, and thinking only of the peasant-woman with whom you are face to face; for not only has she features of far-famed classic beauty, but her magnificent athletic figure reminds you of the Amazons, those world-renowned female warriors who won undying glory in the olden days.

And you will certainly look with great interest at all the Albanian peasant-women you meet. They keep to their national dress, which is a long robe edged with embroidery, and drawn loosely in at the waist with a girdle. Over this they wear a short white woollen jacket with an embroidered black border. For ornaments they have strings of coins round their necks and in their hair. It is very unusual to see one of these women walking or working out of doors without her blanket-looking coat on, even when the sun is so hot that you are feeling the only way to enjoy Greece would be to dress yourself in a cotton bathing-gown and be wheeled about in a cold bath. But I once met a coatless old granny, and she looked as if she had come out in her nightgown by mistake. Her white gown hung loose and straight from top to toe, and the sleeves came flowing out from the neck of it, so that the garment seemed to be all of a piece. It had no collar, and was left open at the throat; but there was a simple line of red embroidery to outline the neck, and similar lines to edge the sleeves.

The priests, too, will always attract your attention,

The Modern Greeks

for not only are their sombre black gowns and high, brimless black hats very noticeable among the pure white and the Oriental colours of the other national costumes, but they wear their hair long.

I am afraid you will be a little disappointed to hear that Greek children do not often wear fancy costumes. At carnival times—the two great national fêtes are New Year's Day and Independence Day (March 25)—boys dress up as clowns, and girls are arrayed in national costume; but in everyday life the girls are clad in simple loose frocks. The boys' suits generally follow the trousers, or loose knickers, and round jacket style; but a frilly tunic "like father's" is nearly as much in favour as the short jacket, and "shirt-sleeves" are common. Blue-and-white check cotton is a very fashionable material for a peasant-boy's suit. Many a time you come across a solitary little figure, who looks very like a ragged duster; but he is not a beggar-boy: he is a poor peasant-child working cheerfully for his living by watching the sheep on a lonely hill-side, or trudging beside the mules up a rough mountain-track.

Up to the present I have been telling you about the clothes worn by the peasants, who form the bulk of the population. Well-to-do merchants, shopkeepers on a large scale, professional men, and their wives, have become quite Western in their ideas of dress, and ladies of means in Athens study and follow the latest Parisian fashions.

But amongst the classes which we have just been speaking of there is a very decided taste for boys' suits of a pattern which you know very well. Little boys, big boys, and youths who would here have long ago

Greece

been promoted to "stand-ups" in collars, are all proud of their sailor costumes, and even the oldest and tallest of them wear those big round straw hats with a broad turned-up brim and a band boasting the name of a ship, such as an English boy of seven would scorn as being only fit for babies.

CHAPTER IV

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

THE Greeks have the reputation of being civil and friendly to strangers. I am going to show you how much that reputation is worth when it is put to the test.

Judging by my own experience, I should say that a traveller in Greece is constantly in the happy state of feeling that every Greek is his host, and that he is an honoured guest. There were odd moments when I felt inclined to alter my opinion entirely ; but as it would be unfair to visit the sins of the few on the kind heads of the many, I shall first introduce you to the Greeks in their rôle of courteous and hospitable hosts to the stranger within their gates.

To begin with the peasants. I had many opportunities of sampling their manners, for I did all my railway travelling third class, lived amongst the poorest natives on their simple native fare, and tramped many a long mile, by night as well as by day, across lonely plains and over wild mountains, far out of reach of any cry for help. My only companion was my friend Charmion,



Manners and Customs

another Englishwoman who was as absolute a stranger as I in that land. How were we treated ?

In the little villages particularly we attracted much attention, for there strangers are much more of a novelty than in the towns. But as travellers usually go to Greece in parties under the escort of an experienced guide, or at any rate put themselves in charge of a dragoman directly they get there, two stranger women by themselves were rather a remarkable spectacle even to the townspeople. Some of the villagers had never seen such a sight before, they told us in the course of examining our clothes, and asking us a hundred and one questions as to our nationality, how we liked their beautiful scenery, the why and wherefore we had come to their beloved country. In the curiosity we excited there was never a trace of rudeness, and sooner or later it always lost itself in a whole-hearted desire to do something, anything, for us.

Friendliness usually took the practical form of feasting us on national delicacies—fruit, *loukoumi*, the sweet-meat which is known in England as Turkish Delight, and *masticha*, a white liqueur, which turns a milky colour when it is mixed, as it generally is, with water. Hospitality of this kind was frequently lavished on us by peasants at wayside inns, but it was in the trains, above all other places, that we were most persistently entertained. All along the route our fellow-travellers would dive into baskets and bags of produce they were taking to market, and bring out for us luscious green figs or bunches of grapes ; they would share with us the melon they had brought as food and drink for the journey ; from one pocket they would extract a couple

Greece

of monstrous peaches, and from another a knife, with which they would proceed to peel them before offering us their gift ; and at every wayside station, where the whole train emptied itself for a walk and a talk, labourers and soldiers would vie with each other in bringing to our carriage window refreshments from the stall which serves as station buffet.

By the shopkeepers we were treated with equal courtesy, and we noticed that the people who sold eatables and drinkables heartily appreciated our preference for native provisions. Had we tasted this and that ? If not, we must do so at once. There was not the least necessity to buy if we did not like what we tasted, or did not want anything more. There was more hospitality than business in these invitations to taste and try, and to refuse would have been ungracious, discourteous. Often the experience was pleasant, but I can assure you it sometimes needed courage to sample such fare as sour-smelling goat's-milk cheese scooped out of a barrel, and various titbits fished out of a keg of oil. The prices we were charged did not lead me to suspect that we were being cheated, and on comparing notes with well-known residents of good standing, I found that we were being quite fairly treated in all our little commercial transactions.

Nevertheless, when it comes to doing anything like a business deal with a Greek, it behoves a foreigner to be on his guard. Traders have a keen eye to business. They are said to rival the Jews in making a bargain. In the commercial world they have acquired a reputation for rather "sharp" methods of transacting business, together with a somewhat dim perception of the moral

Manners and Customs

responsibility of a promise. Experience leads me to believe that this reputation has not yet been lived down sufficiently to bid you ignore it.

With regard to the professional classes, the Greeks themselves admit that their country is troubled with a somewhat high average of undesirables ; but this is an evil which springs from good. Education is so well cared for in Greece that the poorest boys can become doctors, lawyers, and so forth, provided they have the wish to enter on a professional career, and the ability to pass the necessary examinations. As a result of these national educational facilities, the professional ranks get overcrowded, and the keen competition for a livelihood to which this state of affairs gives rise is apt to suggest dishonourable means of gaining money. This problem of overcrowded professions, common to many countries, is a particularly difficult one in Greece, where the ways and means of earning a living are very limited. Only about 18 per cent. of the land is cultivable, so it would not do for every boy to want to be a farmer. And Greek boys have very little encouragement to turn their attention to engineering and industrial pursuits, for manufactures cannot flourish in a country triply handicapped by lack of coal, water-power, and capital.

Let me take you back among friends. One letter of introduction to a man of any standing in the reputable section of the professional classes, together with an interest in art and literature, will quickly carry a stranger into the midst of the aristocracy of Greek intellect ; for the hospitable Greek to whom that letter is presented will not only extend his own warm hand of welcome to his visitor, but take any trouble to bring him into

Greece

contact with the particular authorities he is anxious to meet.

The Greeks, particularly the peasants, have a very gracious way of replying to any expression of gratitude for services voluntarily performed by them on a stranger's behalf. To the merest "Thank you," for anything they do, they answer quite simply : "It is my duty."

CHAPTER V

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS (*continued*)

It is a very common thing to see Greek men of all classes carrying a string of beads. The strings are all lengths, the beads of all kinds, ranging, according to the poverty or wealth of the owner, from the necklet size of a coloured glass variety, such as you can buy here for a penny, to a long, costly chain of real amber finished off with a magnificent yellow tassel. What do you think the beads are for ? They are just playthings—nothing more nor less—strange as it may seem to you that grown-ups should have playthings, and be so fond of them that they carry them about wherever they go. The men like to have something to fidget with, and as they walk along or sit talking to one another their fingers are constantly roving over their beads, twisting one round and round, moving two or three backwards and forwards, or sliding them all up and down the string on which they are loosely threaded.

Greek men are great talkers. The habit of never

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losing an opportunity of hearing themselves speak seems to be born in their blood as an offshoot of the oratorical skill for which the old Greeks were famous. Politics are their favourite topic ; currants come a good second, as the greatest source of national wealth and individual prosperity. They group themselves round little tables in the gay city square, under the verandas of town cafés, and beneath the rudely timbered awnings, picturesquely interlaced with leafy twigs, without the rough-and-tumble wooden shanties that boast the name of café in the little villages. Here they sit for hours on end, criticizing the Government, discussing what ought to be done and what ought not to be done in the best interests of the nation, or prophesying what sort of currant harvest they are likely to have this year. Occasionally one man pauses to sip his coffee ; a neighbour fortifies himself with *loukoumi* ; a third, having scored a point, calls for another *masticha* before starting off on a fresh line of argument. The conversation buzzes on continuously in spite of a momentary lull in this corner or that.

Presently a new-comer sits down. He gives his order to the waiter, and unfolds the latest edition of his favourite paper. Unless you can read Greek, you wonder how he can make head or tail of the twisty-twirly squirligigs that clamber up and down the lines, and carry on the quaintest-looking dumb-show all over the pages. He is soon following their antics with rapt attention, for every Greek carefully reads at least one newspaper a day. But if you wait long enough, you will be sure to see him lean over to his nearest neighbour and point to some paragraph. The two exchange remarks, and in

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another moment they are plunged in a whirlpool of political controversy.

Meanwhile you have noticed another new-comer. He has singled out a vacant spot, and is sitting on a low chair drowsily smoking a nargileh. This is like the Turkish hookah, which you have seen in pictures, I expect. There is a big water-bottle with a long piece of tubing attached to it at one end and to a gaily corded and tasselled pipe at the other, all so arranged that the smoke is cooled by passing through water. You are just beginning to be quite certain that the man with the nargileh is smoking in his sleep, when suddenly he rises to his feet, walks across to one of the little tables near by, and flings himself with fever-heat into the discussion that is going on there.

The coffee served at every class of Greek café is a Turkish brew. A sickly sweet concoction, three parts dregs, is handed to the customer in a tiny cup, and he immediately drops more sugar into it. You would think that the national drink of a hot country would be a cool, refreshing draught, not a hot, treacly syrup, wouldn't you? The other very common Greek drink, *masticha*, is cold, but it, too, is of a syrupy nature. With their meals all the Greeks drink wine. The peasants make theirs at home from the juice of the grapes grown in their own vineyards, so it costs them little or nothing; and the people who do not make wine can buy a big bottle for a few pence in this land of grapes. Not only do the grown-ups drink it, but it is given to quite small children as a matter of course, just as naturally as little people here are given a glass of water, a mug of milk, or a cup of weak tea. Do not imagine, however, that

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the Greeks are a drunken nation. They usually mix water with their wine, and it is a most rare thing to see one of them intoxicated. All the wine brewed for native consumption has resin mixed with it. This helps to keep it good. Moreover, the Greeks like the peculiar flavour it produces. But unless you have a taste for turpentine you would not like it, any more than I did, or other foreigners do.

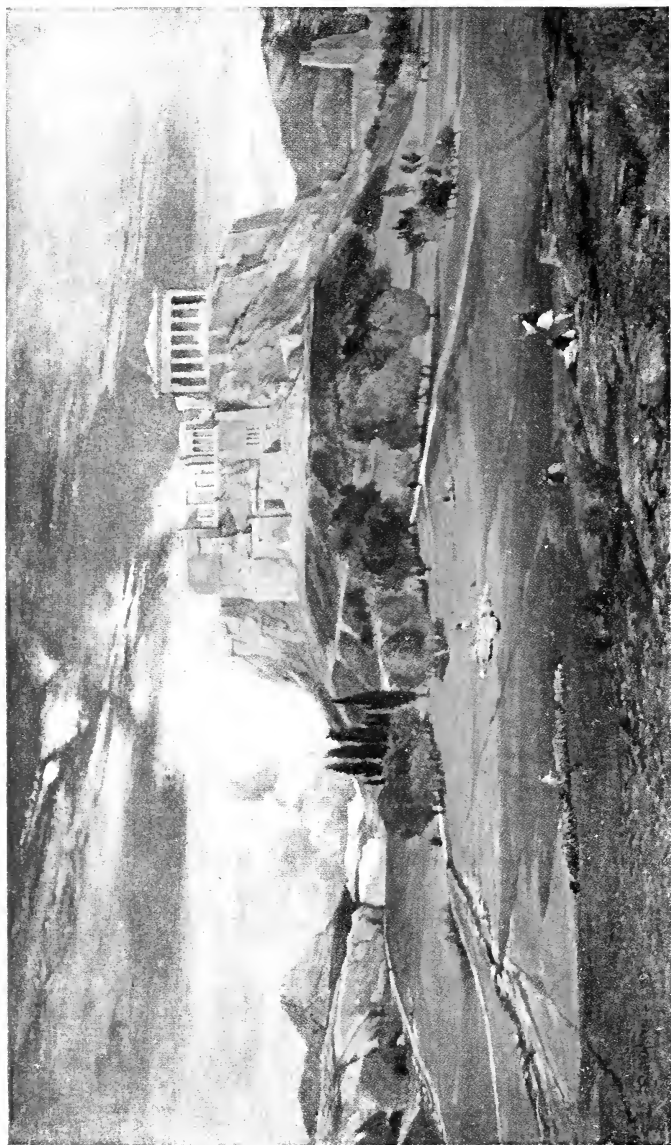
Think of the national beverages of Greece—sickly sweet thick coffee, a syrupy liqueur, and turpentine wine! Are you surprised to hear that the stranger in this sunny, dusty country is often consumed with thirst? You think he can always fly to water. Alas for him if he does! The water in many districts is quite unfit to drink. The Greeks seem to have become more or less inoculated against typhoid by constantly drinking impure water, but woe betide the foreigner who is equally daring. In Athens, where the water is particularly bad, I was particularly careful. I bought what I drank “neat”—pure, cold spring-water brought down in earthen amphoræ from Mount Hymettos, or carried twelve miles into the city from a spring at Amarousi. Often the supply taken to the city in the morning is exhausted by lunch-time, and when in such cases I had failed to lay in a sufficient store, I went without. The only other way I drank water in Athens was boiled—in tea made from a treasured small allowance that the Customs officers had let me bring from England. But in spite of all precautions I was doomed. I had bad dreams one restless night, and woke up in the morning feeling very languid. However, I got up, and after dressing myself with difficulty, went out. I tried to be

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interested in the old temple I went to see, reminded myself that for years I had been longing for this my first visit to it, looked up at the magnificent columns, but they might have been clothes-props for all I could bring myself to care just then. My limbs were aching, my head was burning, ton-weights were jangling in my brain as they tugged at my weary eyes. Charmion took me back home, and put me to bed. The fight was over so far as any conscious effort on my part was possible, and the fever had won. I remember thinking I would give everything I possessed for a glass of water ; I remember trying to explain to somebody that good water could be bought in Athens, and thinking that somebody was a brute to say " Yes," and then pour down my throat a nasty tepid thick fluid—goat's milk, I discovered afterwards. A kind Greek doctor-man nursed me day and night till I turned the corner. For all he knew to the contrary, I should never be able to pay him a penny, but I was a stranger, so it was his " duty " to make sure that his instructions were properly carried out by carrying them out himself. The first thing I asked him when I again began to take an interest in life was : " How on earth did I get it ? I've been on a sort of besieged city allowance of cold water since I've been here, and what I have drunk I bought—the good spring kind, you know."

He smiled. " You can't depend on what you buy unless you know the people you buy it from. The nearest spot where they can draw any sort of water spells ' Mount Hymettos ' or ' Amarousi ' to some of the boys who are sent to the springs."

I had a particular reason for telling you what the



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Greeks drink before telling you what they eat. Many of them hardly ever have what you would call a meal. To the poor peasants their wine is meat and drink, the mainstay of their bodily existence. The other items of their everyday fare are a poor sort of coarse brown bread or a close maize kind that is often as dry as chaff, and a choice between fruit in due season, a few beans, a handful of olives, and a piece of sour-smelling goat's-milk cheese. Now and again, as a treat, they indulge in some dried Labrador cod-fish. Many of them cannot afford meat more than a dozen times in the whole year, and others can only indulge in it once a year as a very special treat. With the townspeople it is a very general custom to have meals out. Public restaurants are a feature of the hotels, and many others having no such connection rub shoulders in both big and little streets. Weather permitting, as it generally does, tables are spread on the pavement fronting the restaurants, in gardens opening out of them, in the city squares, and on seaport quays. At the large establishments in Athens French dishes are served, and the menu is written in French ; but at the smaller places the bill of fare is essentially Greek. A characteristic soup has egg and lemon in it. Meat can generally be obtained in slices off the joint, but the most popular native dish of a substantial nature is *pilafi*, after the style of Italian *risotto*—a rich, savoury, boiled rice-pudding, with or without scraps of meat in it. Emaciated fowls are common. Puddings, as we understand them, are unknown, their place in the menu being taken by fruit, pastry, and ices.

The custom of taking everyday meals in public, and out of doors when possible, is common to other European

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countries, but each time an English traveller comes into touch with it he feels it is a novelty, because of the contrast with what he is used to at home. Think how much you would enjoy the experience of lunching at a little table on the pavement, or going to a big public dinner-party in an open square, with a band to play merry tunes to you. But to Greek children in the towns such things are no treat. To them, quiet meals with father and mother would be much more of a novelty.

CHAPTER VI

A PEEP AT ATHENS

You are all excitement ; the next station is Athens ; in a few minutes you will be in the capital of Greece. You are thinking of the many wonderful things that are waiting for you in one of the most famous old treasure-cities of the world, when presently the train pulls up. You hang out of the window, see a modest platform backed by some unpretentious railway buildings, and make up your mind that this is a suburban stopping-place. You are trying to possess your disappointed soul in patience till the train shall be ready to take you on, when a porter invites you to alight.

“ Going on to Athens,” you tell him.

“ This is Athens,” he replies, holding out a hand for your bag.

You tumble out, and stand looking around you bewildered, disconsolate, like a dreamer rudely torn from

A Peep at Athens

fairyland to be hurled, half awake, into a mean-looking corner of real life. As you follow porter and luggage to one of the little open carriages waiting in an any-sort-of space without, you look back, and say to yourself that a capital which cannot boast a better station than that must indeed be a poor sort of a city in comparison with what you have been led to imagine. But this first impression of Athens only makes the surprise that is in store for you all the more enchanting, for however beautiful you have pictured the city in your wildest dreams, in reality it is far more beautiful.

Athens of to-day has a dual existence. It consists of the very ancient city which raised itself to the political position of leader of Greece in the fifth century B.C., and established its claims to be recognized as the mother of Greek art and learning, and of the modern city, with its two large squares, some good streets, splendid houses, palatial hotels, and fine public buildings, which has sprung up in the interval since 1834, when Athens, then a poor village of about three hundred houses, was chosen by Modern Greece as her new seat of government.

I am going to take you straight to the old city first of all. There, away in the distance, looking down from the top of a hill, is the ancient Athenian citadel, the Acropolis. Round the foot of the Acropolis Hill are perfect remains and magnificent ruins of the old city that was built without the fortress walls as the population increased, art and literature sprung to life, manufactures were founded, commerce was established with the great markets of the ancient world, and Athens grew up from a little garrison to a big, strong, beautiful, and flourishing centre of political supremacy, commercial activity,

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and unique culture. The progressive modern town was born to the north and north-east of the old city. In its short life of less than a hundred years it has already spread itself out over a long and wide area.

It is a tiring, zigzag climb up to the Acropolis, but at last we are mounting a broad flight of steps leading to the Propylæa, or entrance-gateway. The imposing ruins of this great marble structure take up the whole of the upper west side of the Acropolis. The work was begun in 437 B.C. According to the design, it was to have consisted of a central gateway and two wings, but one wing was never completed. In spite of its unfinished condition, the Propylæa was regarded in its time as one of the finest examples of Greek architecture, and even the ruins bid us believe that it was one of the most wonderful of all the wonderful buildings erected by a world-famous race of builders. Through a maze of giant columns we pass into the Acropolis, and find ourselves standing on a levelled hill-top space. Its form, roughly speaking, is elliptical, and on its outline appear remains of the massive fortress walls which guarded the ancient citadel.

Besides the Propylæa, there are two great buildings now standing on the Acropolis—the Parthenon and the Erechtheum—and they have a small but very beautiful companion in the Temple of Nike Apteros.

The Parthenon, erected between 454 B.C. and 438 B.C., is celebrated as the most beautiful of all Greek buildings. The architects who designed it were named Ictinus and Callicrates. The decoration of their building involved a great national responsibility, for in itself it was a perfect work of art. The task was entrusted to the

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sculptor Phidias, who won everlasting fame by the way he carried it out.

Some of the most beautiful and best-preserved of the sculptures which adorned the Parthenon are now numbered by England among her most precious national treasures. If you have not already been to the British Museum to see them, you should go there for this express purpose as soon as ever you can. It is a great treat for you to look forward to.

The Erechtheum dates from 420 B.C. to 393 B.C. This temple was specially sacred in the eyes of the Athenians, as it contained the shrine of Athena Polias, the guardian of the city, together with various State treasures intimately connected with their religion. In spite of the fact that the Erechtheum has been altered, despoiled, patched up, destroyed, and restored, it is rich in the possession of much of its original beauty. One of its most interesting parts is the Southern or Caryatid Porch, in which six sculptured maidens (Caryatides), standing on a marble parapet, carry the roof on their heads. You can see one of the original Caryatides in the British Museum. It has been replaced in the porch by a terracotta cast.

The little temple of Nike Apteros, or "Wingless Victory," was built in 438 B.C. to commemorate the three great Athenian victories of Marathon, Salamis, and Platæa. It was destroyed by the Turks in the seventeenth century, and the materials were built into a battery. The battery in its turn was destroyed in 1836, the materials of the temple were recovered, and the temple was reconstructed.

Let us now go and rest awhile in the shadow of the

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Parthenon, while I talk to you for a few minutes about the Greek master-builders whose work still adorns the Acropolis, and entices artistic pilgrims not only to many other parts of Greece besides Athens, but to Italy, Sicily, and Asia Minor, where they worked with equal skill and industry.

CHAPTER VII

THE MASTER-BUILDERS OF GREECE

GREECE is the proud possessor of two rich architectural inheritances. The one was bequeathed to her by the Mycenæan builders, the other by the pure Greek or Hellenic builders.

The Mycenæan builders were at work in the land more than three thousand years ago—in the Wonder Age, before the Hellenes rose to power. They were sons of a rich, highly cultured, and mighty kingdom, of which the chief towns were Mycenæ, Argos, and Tiryns, in the district between the Gulfs of Corinth and Nauplia. Recently it has been discovered that this old Mycenæan kingdom was an offshoot of a much older, more powerful, and more highly cultured nation, whose headquarters were the island of Crete. The Cretans were highly skilled in the art of building. As long as four, or maybe five, thousand years ago they were erecting well-planned, vast, and magnificent palaces. If ever you go to Crete, you will be able to see the ruins of these marvellous palaces, and how your heart will beat with excitement

The Master-Builders of Greece

as you stand before one of them ! It is believed to be the Palace of Minos, the very place where he kept the monster Minotaur in the Labyrinth.

The Cretan architects, builders, and decorators must have had extraordinary intelligence, stupendous knowledge, vivid imagination, and wondrous skill. In the vast areas of buildings that have recently been unearthed at Phæstos and Knossos spacious open courts are approached by unrivalled flights of steps ; great halls opening out of these courts are entered through magnificent pillared porches ; corridors branch off in every direction, leading to living-rooms, state apartments, and sacred precincts ; staircases lead to upper stories ; magazines, long and wide galleries for the storage of supplies and the safe deposit of valuables, are guarded by massive walls ; there is a thoroughly scientific drainage system ; there are frescoes and ornamental stonework. And still I have not told you about half the wonders of these palaces that carry us back four thousand years or more, and challenge us to produce anything in modern architecture that can outrival them. Now, when I tell you about the wonderful things done in Greece by the Mycenæan builders, you will believe what would sound impossible if you did not know they were the descendants of a great building family.

In making walls and framing openings the Mycenæans used gigantic stone blocks, which look as though they must have been rent asunder from the mountains by Titanic hands, borne to the scene of building operations on Titanic shoulders, and piled on high or hoisted aloft by Titanic arms to take their place in a Titanic abode.

Famous among the existing remains of their work is

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the Lion Gate at Mycenæ, a most wonder-striking feat, by which three giant stones are made to outline an entrance-space. Two of the stones, each $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, stand up as posts, and balanced on the top of them is a monster lintel $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, 8 feet broad, and more than 3 feet thick in the middle. Above is a triangular block, bearing the sculptured likeness of two weird-looking beasts. These are the lions rampant after which the gate is named. The Lion Gateway was the principal entrance to the Acropolis of Mycenæ.

The Mycenæans were also the designers and makers of the "beehive" tombs that are found at Mycenæ and in other parts of Greece. These tombs are cut out of and constructed within a hill, and their picturesque shape is well described by the name that has been given them. They look exactly like the inside of a beehive might if it were scooped out of a piece of rock, only they are so many times bigger that you must imagine them as enormous underground rooms. The finest of the beehive tombs yet discovered is the one at Mycenæ, which is sometimes called the "Tomb of Agamemnon," sometimes the "Treasury of Atreus."

I will make one more attempt to give you the very faintest idea of the Brobdingnagian methods of these early builders in Greece. This time I will ask you to try to grasp a few facts about one of their citadels. The citadel of Tiryns was 980 feet long, and about 330 feet broad. It was terraced into upper and lower divisions, and on the former stood a vast palace. The whole fortress was surrounded by a massive wall, made up for the most part of blocks of stone from 6 feet to 10 feet long, and 3 feet wide. These blocks were piled on the top of



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each other, and when they did not exactly fit the spaces between were filled up with smaller stones. The height of this encircling wall is said to have been 65 feet, and its average thickness 26 feet.

If you can form the very least idea of size and weight from figures, you will not be at all surprised to hear that in the days not long ago, when ancient Crete was buried deep, and history had nothing to tell about the ancestors of the Mycenæans, people were inclined to believe that the first builders in Greece belonged to an extraordinary race of giants. Their work was then, and is still, often called by the distinguishing name "Cyclopean," after the fairy-tale giants who tore asunder from the hills mighty rocks, and flung their gigantic missiles high o'er the waves at Ulysses in an endeavour to wreck that hero's ship during one of the most perilous of all his exciting adventures.

The second great architectural inheritance of Greece is the work of the Hellenes, men who won for themselves for all time a place of honour among the world's master-builders. These are the men who built the Parthenon, where we are now talking together about them, and who glorified not only Athens, but all mainland Greece, her islands, and her colonies, with magnificent temples, great market-places with colonnaded promenades, vast arenas for athletic sports, and open-air theatres embosomed in a hill-side, with tier upon tier of seats sweeping up and around in majestic semicircular array.

Since the Hellenic builders are commonly known as the Greek builders, we will call them by that name.

It is thought that the Greek builders were descended in some way from the Mycenæans. There are good

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reasons for this belief, but at present there are missing links in the chain of evidence by which it is hoped some day to link up the work of Cretan, Mycenæan, and Greek builders into a continuous story.

You will be quite justified, therefore, in *thinking* that the Greeks learned something about building from earlier artists and craftsmen who worked in their country. You may be certain that they learned various things from more distant neighbours, for as Greece was brought into close contact with the East they had many opportunities of studying the highly developed science and art of such great Oriental builders as the Assyrians and Egyptians. But above all things you may be positive that the building instinct was inborn in the Greeks, that it was one of Nature's greatest gifts to the nation; for the Greek builders were artists. What they saw they did not merely copy, what they learned they did not just repeat. Their work may suggest that they were students in this or that school, but it will always make you feel that they were ideal students, to whom education was but a foundation for originality. It may remind you of such and such an older building which may have inspired beautiful Greek forms and decorative designs, but you will always feel in these the warm, vital breath of the creator, never see the cold, lifeless hand of the copyist. And the more you see of the work of these master-builders, the more conscious you will be that the main sources of their inspiration were their own magnificent country, their own religion, their own national spirit.

The Greeks built in three distinct styles, which are always called "Orders." These three Greek Orders are named Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.

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The Doric Order is the oldest. The simplest way I can help you to recognize it is to tell you that it is very plain and massive; that the columns have no base or foot; that the shoulder or *capital* of each column bulges at the bottom, and has a square slab on the top; and that the frieze or middle part of the entablature is divided vertically into strips. Every other strip is a *metope*—a space left blank or ornamented with sculpture—and the strips in between are grooved. The Parthenon is the noblest example of the use of this Order.

The Ionic Order has a very distinctive feature in its capital, which curves gracefully round into scrolls.

The Corinthian Order also has a distinctive capital. It is bell-shaped, and ornamented with acanthus-leaves.

Less than half a century ago much of the work of both the Mycenæan and Greek builders was buried deep down out of sight, together with rich treasures of sculpture, vases, metal-work, and jewellery that are now to be seen in various museums in Greece, notably in the National Museum at Athens. English, French, German, and American art-lovers have helped Modern Greece with money, brains, muscles, and enthusiasm to unearth much of her buried inheritance of ancient wealth and splendour. As your debt to the master-builders of Greece has become mixed up with an international debt to the excavators of that country, I am particularly anxious that you should not picture an excavating scene as so many people do—two or three bald-headed professors grubbing among dust and ashes for gruesome skulls, dry bones, lifeless stones, and any old dead thing, the uglier the better, over which they can get up an argument. Excavating

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is one of the most exciting forms of exploration that you can possibly imagine. If I tell you what a well-known excavator of the present day has said about it you will, I hope, be able to conjure up a truer and far more fascinating scene than the oft-imagined one against which I have warned you. Listen ! Do you think these sound like the cold-blooded sentiments of a Professor Dryasdust ?

“ The most intense excitement which I have ever felt is that of excavating. An artist who is overcome by this passion should describe the surroundings in which archaeological researches are being made, should reproduce from life the anxiety of the first attempts, describe the technique of the pits and trenches, and the coming to light of the documents which speak when history is silent. If the artist and the archaeologist could transmit to the reader the enthusiasm and excitement which he feels while standing among the labourers when the pick gives a hollow sound and the ground echoes as a presage of new discoveries ; if he could show the hands which tremble as they grope in the earth, or timidly pass over the fragments of a work of art to remove the coating of dust which hides it ; if he could explain the hidden power of excavation to exalt the mind, and the insistent, almost childish call on Fortune to grant new treasures, he would write, not a book, but a romance, a drama of the human soul which seeks the unknown ” (Dr. Angelo Mosso in “ The Palaces of Crete and their Builders ”).

A Peep at Athens

CHAPTER VIII

A PEEP AT ATHENS (*continued*)

YOU are still on the Acropolis, standing on a rock platform amidst majestic marble forms that have been tanned from glistening white to rich warm orange and russet tints, melting into glowing topaz and delicate amber hues. What a panorama unfolds itself as you look down, up, and around! Behold, amidst the slopes which billow round the foot of the Acropolis Hill there is another beautiful Greek building, another, and yet others, and there, in striking contrast to their straight-lined dignity, are massive round arches, telling in the poetry of curves the story of how the Romans conquered Greece, and how they, too, became a great building nation. Watch how the modern town is stealthily advancing over the plains, but there are still fine stretches of open country where olive-groves play stately games with the sun or sleep peacefully in their own shadow, untroubled by any immediate fear of being turned out of their ancient home by houses and shops. Look how the sea in the distance borders a long coast-line with a deep blue hem embroidered with silvery islands! See how the mountains enfold Athens in their giant arms!

When you have looked at the changing scenes of the Athenian panorama from every angle of the Acropolis at one particular hour of the day, you have by no means come to the end of the magnificent show. At every hour of the day these scenes change colour. With a change of temperature tones fade or deepen. Thus, at

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dawn-break you may see Athens gleaming opalescent, at sun-height glittering every shade of blue from palest turquoise to deepest sapphire, at sunset glowing mauve, amethyst, violet, and right royal purple ; and inset among these great masses of rich milky opal, shaded blues, or variegated purples are the characteristic patches of local colour in which some of the hills, valleys, and marble temples clothe themselves at stated times of day. At sunset Hymettos dons a mantle of the most delicate rose-pink tint ; in the early morning sunshine the bed of the Ilissus has a peacock coverlet ; in the full glare of sunshine the Acropolis is robed in golden-brown. And now, having given you some sunlight peeps into this enchanted kaleidoscope, I will leave you to picture yourself looking down at Athens from the Acropolis, or up at the Acropolis from Athens, in the fantastic moonlight.

Before we leave the Acropolis, let us go and stand up by the little Temple of Nike. Look at the scene before you. It is the very picture which, in the hour of sunset, Byron describes so vividly, so graphically, in "The Corsair":

"Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
Along Morea's hills the setting sun ;
Not, as in Northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light !
O'er the hush'd deep the yellow beam he throws
Gilds the green wave, that trembles as it glows.
On old Ægina's rock and Idra's isle,
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile ;
O'er his own regions lingering, loves to shine,
Though there his altars are no more divine.
Descending fast the mountain shadows kiss
Thy glorious gulf, unconquer'd Salamis !
There azure arches through the long expanse
More deeply purpled meet his mellowing glance,

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And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,
Mark his gay course, and own the hues of heaven ;
Till, darkly shaded from the land and deep,
Behind his Delphian cliff he sinks to sleep."

And now we will run down the long hill, up which we dragged ourselves step by step when we were coming to take a peep at the Athenian citadel.

On the lower ground there are many remains of ancient Athens, among which I think you would enjoy wandering for a few moments before we dive into the modern town.

Here is the Theseum, a finely preserved Doric temple dating from about 465 B.C.

Not far off is a very much smaller and quite different type of building. It is a circular monument of fine design, roofed in with a single block of marble, and crowned with an ornament. The ornament supplies the key to the reason for which the monument was erected. It supported a triangular slab of marble whereon rested the bronze tripod won by Lysicrates, who in 335 B.C. was awarded the prize for the best-trained tragic chorus. This *Ghoragic Monument of Lysicrates* is a type of the monuments that were erected to commemorate the victories gained by athletic and artistic competitors in the Grecian festivals. There used to be a whole "Street of Tripods" at Athens.

Here is a great curved hollow in a side of the Acropolis Hill. This is the world-renowned Theatre of Dionysus. What stirring tales it has to tell of the vast crowds, sometimes thirty thousand strong, that foregathered here to watch a play by this or that favourite and famous national dramatist ! You can still see many of the seats of the

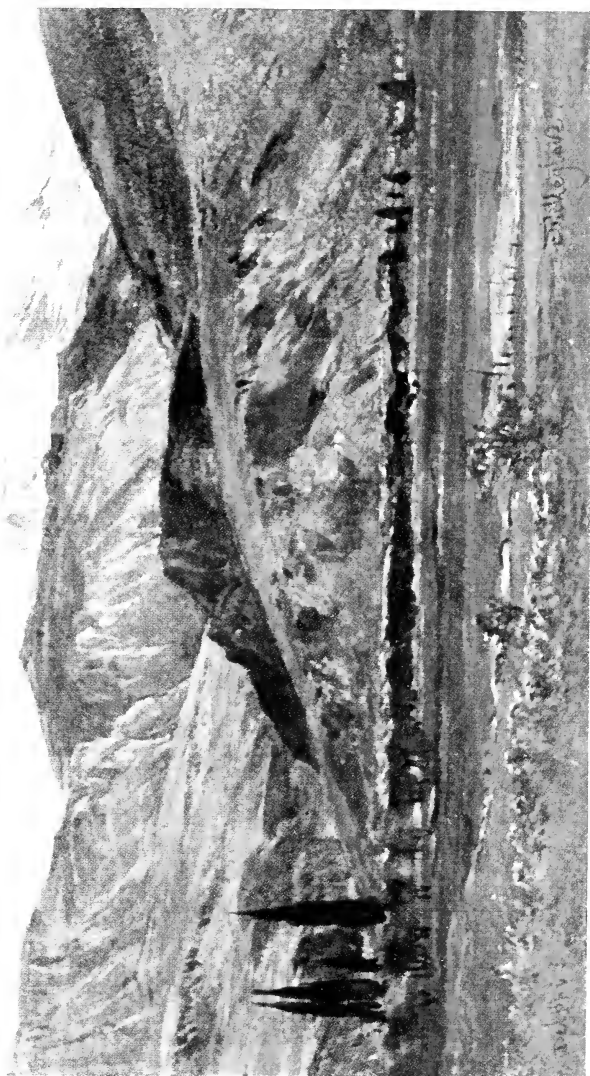
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multitude and some of the seats of the mighty. The masses sat round on the semicircular stone benches ; the priests and high dignitaries had marble thrones in the middle of the front rows. The performances took place in the daytime, and lasted for hours on end. That was in the days when the Greeks took the drama seriously. It was bound up with their religion, was a vital part of their national life. Nowadays they prefer a cinematograph show !

Here is the " old " stadium, looking spick and span, for a few years ago it was completely restored, with the object of reviving the ancient national games. Close by are some of the magnificent Corinthian columns of the ancient Temple of Jupiter Olympus, and another little walk brings us to the Tower of the Winds—an octagonal building named after symbolic figures of the chief winds, with which it is ornamented in sculpture. It was designed for a very useful life. It housed a water-clock, and acted as a sundial and a weathercock.

Near this tower is the street shown in one of the illustrations, and I am sure you will like to have the picture as a memento ; for it is your first glimpse of the quarter in Modern Athens that will fascinate you more than any other part of the town. There is a Western atmosphere about the rest of the new city. Trams run up and down the wide streets, the shops display French goods, the houses are handsomely-ordinary looking, the people you see about are more or less smartly attired in clothes such as you are accustomed to see at home.

But in the neighbourhood of this street you feel the Eastern strain in native Greece, and if you have ever heard " the East a-callin'," how you will revel in this



DELPHI FROM ITEA. PAGES 43 TO 55.

A Peep at Athens

sudden, unexpected plunge into an atmosphere which has something of the Oriental in it !

Look at the goods displayed for sale in this "Bazar Oriental," which quite frankly caters for tourist as well as native custom. Here are the red shoes with large black woollen pompons, as worn by so many of the peasants. The embroidered garments are peasant-costumes. The little embroidered bags are made up as "souvenirs" from the bottom hem or sleeves of such costumes. You will certainly buy one, and just as certainly you will persuade yourself that your particular specimen has been manufactured from part of a brigand's coat. The big bags, which you will recognize as akin to the carpet-bags sometimes used by our country cousins, are made of coloured hemp. They are much in favour with the peasants for taking their vegetables to market, for carrying provisions for a journey, and for taking home their various purchases. Beads, jewellery, Oriental carpets and rugs, and old embroideries are also among the chief articles for sale at this emporium, where everything glows with colour, where crude bright patches of vermilion, indigo, and gamboge first strike your eye, and make the barbarian in you jump with joy as you become the proud possessor of this or that new trifle, and where rich harmonies of faded and washed-out old rose, silvery blue, lemon-gold, and terra-cotta rouse the artist in you till your heart aches and your hands itch to run away with all the costly old stuffs you see.

We turn the corner round by this "Bazar," and find ourselves in a very narrow street lined with shops, mostly open-fronted. The shopkeepers are Greeks or Turks; some idle about the doors, others sit in the doorways

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busily at work. One narrow street leads into another. We are in a maze of alleys, and each alley has its special trade. In one we are amongst the bag-makers, in another we find the shoemakers, in another the makers and menders of pots and pans, or the harness-makers, who seem to spend most of their time in designing and making gay bead-trappings for the mules and donkeys.

Yes, this quarter is noisy, smelly, stuffy, and dirty, I admit, but it is a feature of Modern Athens which makes you feel that Greece must still be regarded as part of the Near East.

A Walk to Delphi

CHAPTER IX

A WALK TO DELPHI

OUR steamer dropped anchor at Itea, the port of Delphi, between five and six on a September afternoon of last year. We were rowed ashore in a tub-like little boat, and instead of being met at the landing-stage, as we had expected, by a rabble clamouring to drive us up, we were allowed to set foot on the steps unmolested. It was not the season for visitors. The half-dozen or so men and boys who had collected on the primitive quay were all clustering round the only other folk who had come ashore—two American women, with a dragoman and imposing-looking luggage. We were tramps with handbags, so there was no competition for us.

The other drago selected a porter, and piloted his charges to the only carriage to be seen, waiting to order for them.

I was “drago” to Charmion, and went by that name with her throughout our wanderings. In pursuance of my duties, I had just settled with our boatman. Charmion, meanwhile, had picked up both our bags, and was absent-mindedly watching the party drive away. Now it was that I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves seize the bags

from her. The moment when she might have expected such an onslaught had passed. Utterly unprepared as she now was for attack, the man came off victor without so much as a struggle. Charmion looked indignant. It was one of the moments in which she was obviously wishing she had learned the language before she came. I was about to remonstrate in the best modern Greek I could summon to our aid, when the triumphant one addressed us in better English.

If we would come across the road to his hotel—the best in Itea—we should be very welcome. He would arrange for a carriage to drive us up to Delphi. He seemed very anxious to befriend us. Apparently no one else was ready to make himself useful for love or money ; so we followed him across the road, and into the reception-room of what boasted itself without in rickety, odd-shaped capitals as the “Hotel of Delfi.” The “best hotel in Itea”—and, to do it justice, we saw none better-looking—was furnished with some rude wooden benches, bare-board tables, dilapidated wooden chairs, and a corner counter backed by sparsely clothed shelves and a view into a rough-and-tumble kitchen.

You had little to offer us in the way of comfort, and we were not anxious to spend the night at your inn, mine host Diamandes ; but if we had known what lay before us, there would now be a different tale to tell. And I am sure that other tale would bristle with your kindly deeds, even as this begins and ends with your hospitality. You were a friend in need, Diamandes. We shall never forget you, never cease to be grateful to you.

Diamandes deposited our bags on a table, and sallied

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forth. When he returned we were having *masticha*, for the "good of the house," price one penny a glass, no extra charge to visitors. He could not get a carriage for us under twenty-five drachmas—nearly a pound. It was getting late for such a long journey. Doubtless we knew it was a two and a half hours' drive from Itea to Delphi. This while he drank a *masticha* as our guest, according to the custom of the country.

Yes, we knew ; and very probably the price asked for a carriage was a fair one, but we were not prepared to pay so much. Besides, we had been saying to each other how much we should enjoy a walk in the cool of the evening. Could he arrange for a man with a mule to carry up our bags ?

Again he went forth quite cheerfully to do our bidding. He was gone a long time, and when he returned it was with the sad news that he could not persuade any man to saddle a mule at that hour of night and come with us.

That hour of night indeed ! Why, with all this delay, it was barely half-past six ! What unenterprising folk the Iteans must be ! I begged him to try again. He did—this time with success. A man would be at the door with his mule in a quarter of an hour or so. The moment was not far away when we were to wish that one particular Itean had not proved so abnormally enterprising, to understand why the others had all with one accord made excuses for not accompanying us.

In procession we moved off. The mule led the way, with our Thermos bottle strapped securely on to the pack-saddle, our bags balanced on either side ; a very poor, wiry-strong-looking Greek, in flippety-floppety

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red shoes, patched cotton trousers, and a duster-print tunic, followed a few paces behind ; arm in arm, Charmion and I brought up the rear. The man had the air of a martyr ; the mule ambled on dejectedly. *They* knew what lay before them. Charmion and I were a very happy couple, in blissful ignorance of everything save the prospect of a joyful expedition and the delight of wandering in the open with eyes fronting the mountain among mountains whither we were bound.

At a bend in the road we turned to wave a final farewell to friend Diamandes, who stood watching the last of us in the middle of the road outside his inn ; then we fell to regretting that Delphi was not twice the distance away. We had been cooped up on a little Greek steamer all day ; it was glorious to be able to stretch our legs again without having to dodge boxes, packages, and cockroaches. By taking the pedestrian path we should be up at Delphi before nine, reckoning according to our guide-book time-allowance for the journey, and we were in the mood to walk on till midnight !

For the first twenty minutes or so nothing happened to damp our ardour. We were tramping at a steady pace along a good open road, with beautiful vineyards to right and left ; then all in a moment the sun toppled back over the horizon, and we were plunged into utter darkness at the precise moment when the mule headed off to the right and entered a thick olive-grove. The last thing we caught sight of was the man beckoning to us to follow. We groped our way forward as fast as possible, and having caught up with the man, kept to heel. An impenetrable blackness enshrouded us. Neither of us voiced fear—it would have been fatal to own up

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even to ourselves that there was anything to be afraid of—but here we were completely shut in, alone with a stranger man, a guide procured for us by another stranger man.

On comparing notes afterwards, Charmion and I found that our thoughts were running in the same groove. We were trying to remember precisely the emphatic terms in which the guide-book extolled the state of public safety in Greece, thinking of the last evening before we left home, when I had solemnly read the paragraph aloud to her anxious mother ; trying to laugh to ourselves in the spirit we had laughed aloud on the very afternoon we left England, when, a few minutes before the train started, a friend, influential in the theatrical world, had promised to organize a benefit performance to provide the ransom should we be captured by brigands. What a hopelessly delicious promise it had sounded to me in particular, for the triple bill was to consist of *my* one-act plays. But all the time we were in that olive-grove we were expecting our guide suddenly to turn on us with a request for our purses ; we felt the first grip of a hand roughly seizing us ; we saw him going away, leaving us prostrate on the ground, maimed, maybe murdered. And riding riot over all lighter and reassuring thoughts were two solemnly disconcerting facts. We had heard that stray brigands are still to be met occasionally in solitary Greek spots, and we had with us a letter to the Crown Prince of Greece given us by a Greek gentleman before we left London “ in case of accidents.”

What an interminable distance it seemed through that black olive-grove ! We were both silently trying to

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comfort ourselves with the reflection that if our companion meant "business," he had already had plenty of time and good opportunity for an initial move. Really, he seemed to be an honest fellow, after all, and—the inky blackness was melting into a dull grey. We strained our eyes. What joy! The end of the olive-grove was in sight. Beyond was shadowland, but how good it would be to have even a moment's respite in the open. Surely the moon would be lighting up soon, and the stars would be shining, and then—we were pressing forward through a thick black curtain into the murky beyond. In another second we should be able to breathe freely—in that other second, out of the shadows ahead crept three figures with guns on their shoulders, dogs at their sides.

Brigands—accomplices—we were caught by design in the very mouth of the trap! Two women to one man, we might have had a ghost of a chance in a scuffle in the grove; we might have escaped, and hidden ourselves among the trees; but here, where we could be descried in the dimness, we were two women to four men and three fierce-looking dogs, miles and mountains beyond earshot of anyone who might be disposed to answer a cry for help.

The bravest adventurer with imagination may feel "jumpy" in the course of long-drawn-out second by second, minute after minute, of waiting for a possible something with which he will have to grapple; but alas for the traveller who flinches when face to face with real danger! The chances are 100 to 1 against escape, and even though luck may carry him through safely this time, his wandering days are numbered. He can no longer



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rely on his nerves in a crisis. The quicker he gets back to fireside, armchair, and slippers, the better it will be for himself, and the better still will it be for his more trustworthy wanderer friends, who run the risk of being victimized by him as a travelling-companion.

A second after the men loomed on our path Charmion broke a long silence.

“Same old story, drago ; I’m getting hungry.”

“Beaten you this time. I’ve been hungry for a good half-hour without so much as a murmur. We had the last of my chocolate on the boat. Any of yours left ?”

To the tune of commonplace banter we had evenly pursued our way to meet the brigands. We were on a line with them.

“Καλ’ ἐσπέρα σαῦς [Good-evening],” I gave them greeting.

“Καλ’ ἐσπέρα σαῦς,” they nodded back, as they plunged into the grove. We passed on into the open. They were watchmen on their way to the plains for the night to mount lonely guard over the vineyards !

CHAPTER X

A WALK TO DELPHI (*continued*)

AFTER emerging from the olive-grove we began to ascend. Over one rugged mound after another we climbed up, up and ever up, without getting much farther on our way. Sometimes we struck a beaten track—in reality very rough, but quite smooth com-

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pared with the rougher hillsides. We would make a *détour* to follow it, but almost as soon as we had fallen into the swing of a quicker pace the track would lose itself in a steep, stony expanse. And all the time we were threading our way through the darkness, for the moon did not rise at all that night, and never a star came out to help us on our way.

At last there peered down at us from a hill-top the lights of a village.

"Delphi!" I cried excitedly to Charmion.

"I thought we were never going to get there, didn't you?" she panted. "Been a bit of a pull up, hasn't it?"

The man turned, pointing to the lights. Before he could speak I was exclaiming jubilantly:

"Yes, we've seen them. Delphi at last!"

"No," he replied laconically; "Chryso—halfway!"

At Chryso we halted awhile at a ramshackle café. What excitement among the villagers foregathered here for the evening! How they plied us with question after question, chorus of questions after chorus of questions! But how kind they all were! The few chairs in the place were entirely at our disposal. We might have seated ourselves on anyone's favourite corner of any little table; but we preferred to loiter in the doorway under the veranda, while we refreshed ourselves on grapes, and our man, having partaken of one *masticha* and abstemiously refused a second, adjusted the burden on the mule's back.

They gave us a right royal send-off from the café—free grapes . . . best wishes . . . when were we coming down from Delphi? . . . hoped to see us on our way back . . . were we sure we wouldn't have a *masticha*?

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We shouldn't be able to get anything else till we reached Delphi.

One of the men joined our procession. He explained that he was going with us to his house, a little higher up the hill, to get us a lantern.

"On a dark night like this," he added, "you'll be glad of a light. It gets a bit rough farther on."

Gets a bit rough! What could the way ahead be like if it were rougher than the way behind?

We had not left Chryso many minutes before we were clambering up broken-back hills and over great humps of rock, picking our way as well as we could, one foot before the other, among the ragged, cragged depths of their trackless surface covering. No sooner had we manipulated one height than we had to start manœuvring another. At last, worn out to the point of desperation, eyes weary of searching for a foothold, limbs shaken to a state of passive endurance, we stumbled blindly on. Fearful of sprained ankles, we had long forgotten all fear of treachery on the part of our guide; we now forgot all fear of sprained ankles in the momentary terror of losing sight of him. The mule piloted the way, and what a pace the little beast was setting! Yet neither of us had the heart to add our burden to his load. The man carried the lantern, and kept up with the mule. Unless we wanted to be lost among these lonely mountains, it was imperative for us to keep up with the lantern.

No one spoke a word. It seemed hopeless to inquire how much farther on we had to go, and the man was apparently oblivious to our very existence as he silently groped his way ahead.

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But a moment came at length when he turned round, halted, and called back to us. As he waved the lantern upwards the dim outline of a hill-top flickered into sight some yards above.

“Last lap,” I said to Charmion, interpreting the gist of the man’s explanation that Delphi was round the corner on the top there.

“My last lap, in any case,” gasped Charmion, with a gallant but feeble attempt at a laugh.

The top of the hill—a bend to the right—the road—in the near distance an inn, our inn. Like Dorando coming home in the Marathon race, somehow we reached our goal, but how we managed to cover those last few paces in our utterly exhausted condition puzzles us both to this very day. We had been nearly four hours coming up under the adverse conditions of an exceptionally dark night, and anyone who has climbed to Delphi in less time by a better light will tell you what an arduous journey it is, even when you can see to pick out the least bad bits of the very bad way.

But most people drive up from Itea. The carriage-road first crosses a plain, and then zigzags very gently up the hill to a height of about two thousand feet. This well-kept, zigzag road is a very skilful piece of engineering work.

Mine host of the inn at Delphi is a Greek, who is quite a character in his way. To tell the truth, anyone might be forgiven for summing him up at first sight as an undesirable character to throw in one’s lot with. I shall never forget my first sight of him standing outside his door as we approached the inn. I can best describe my feelings by telling you that he looks like an ogre or a

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gargoyle. But his face and figure do him injustice. He is the most indefatigable and most amiable of hosts. His beds are clean, his cooking excellent, and his prices moderate.

He conducted us by candle-light to our room. What a delightful haven it seemed to our weary eyes and aching limbs! yet it was only what we should call at home a poor sort of little place to sleep in. I said we were hungry. What could he suggest at this late hour?

He gave the matter careful consideration. An omelette and a bottle of wine, he ventured to think, would make a nice little supper. We should like the wine he would give us—there was no resin in it.

He left us, and in a minute we heard him giving orders in the kitchen close by. The next minute he was back in our room clearing the wash-stand and laying our supper on it!

We awoke next morning feeling thoroughly refreshed, to tell each other that it was worth all the trials of the previous evening's climb up to get a clean bed to sleep in.

But to see Delphi it would have been worth spending the night as we spent other less fortunate ones in Greece, when beds were beyond the power of Keating, and floors too dirty to lie on—eating biscuits, making tea, and generally playing shipwrecked mariners on our portmanteaus as islands, or sitting curled up on chairs, sleeping with our heads on a table.

On the famous site of Delphi, which has been excavated by the French, there are some magnificent specimens of Greek architecture—as, for example, the theatre and stadium—and scattered among the more perfect buildings are vast expanses of ruins, including the remains of

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the Temple of Apollo, whither the Greeks went to consult the Oracle.

For magnificence of situation the site of Delphi, to my mind, has no rival in all the beautiful land of Greece. I have heard people say that they prefer Olympia. The choice is purely a matter of temperament. Olympia lies in the bosom of wooded hills ; Delphi towers aloft among untamed heights. Nature in her smiling moods may give me passing pleasure, but it is only in her wild, ungovernable humours that she can hold me spell-bound. I wonder, do you feel the same ? If so, we are friends indeed, and I am longing to go to Delphi with you, as you must be wishing to go with me. Come, let the magic of perfect sympathy waft us there—take me back to a spot for which memory makes my heart ache, take you to glean your first remembrance of its potent charm.

We are standing on a hill crown, jewelled with old stones knit together into majestic buildings. See at your feet the ranks of naked hills that have warred against each other for their wilful way down to the valley, and tumbled pell-mell in the fight. Look up at the bare mountains which sweep in a wide circle round your head. How heavily they are deep-scarred with gorges and chasms, yet how proudly, defiantly they stand, ready to fight again with every power in heaven above or in the earth below !

You will not be surprised to hear that, when the day for departure came, Charmion and I were careful to leave Delphi in time to get down to Itea before sunset. I rode back on the mule between the bags ; Charmion, with terrifying recollections of a previous mule-ride, pre-

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ferred to trust her own legs. But really there is no need to be afraid of riding muleback. The little beasts certainly have two habits which are alarming till you make up your mind to get used to them—they stumble freely, and if they are passing a precipice they insist on picking their way along the very edge of it. But if you put your whole faith in them, and just sit tight, they will carry you as safely up and down sheer, rugged hills as across a level, beaten track.

At Itea we took leave of our trusty guide, and patted the mule farewell at the door of the "best hotel." Diamandes came out to greet us, and insisted on carrying in our bags. The boat that was to take us to Patras would not be in the harbour for an hour, he said, so we must come inside and rest till she arrived. Big rain-drops were beginning to clatter on the quay—the first rain we had seen in Greece—so we hurried in. The boat was more than an hour late, and in the interval of waiting the rain poured in torrents, as though a water-spout were bursting over Itea, so we were particularly glad to be under shelter.

When at last the steamer came into harbour, Diamandes saw us into the little boat that was to take us aboard, carefully drying two seats for us with his apron before handing us down. We pressed his hand in warm farewell, but I fear we did not tell him how much we appreciated all his courtesies. He was one of the nice people you always want to thank when you have left them, but who go out of their way to be kind to you so naturally that when you are with them you are inclined to take all they do for you as a matter of course.

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CHAPTER XI

STREET AND WAYSIDE SCENES

ONE of the most distinctive sights of the streets is the *loustros*, or shoeblack. He may be a man, but more often than not he is a boy, and a very little fellow at that.

The *loustros* is not at all particular about his own appearance. If, as frequently happens, he is a picturesque ragamuffin as well as a dirty one, he owes it to his good fortune of looks and surroundings. But how different with his kit ! One glance at that shows what a pride he takes in it. His box is profusely ornamented with chased brass plates and studded with copper nails, and by the way all the speckless metal-work shines you can easily see he puts his heart into the work of keeping it bright. What a paraphernalia of brushes, bottles, and tins he spreads out before him ! Examine them all as carefully as you will, the blacking-brush has never strayed into the brown-paste tin, the browning-brush has never wandered over a black boot, the brown paste is not allowed to hob-nob with the black paste, creams are evidently forbidden to trickle down the sides of their bottles in case they should smear the box, and the polishing-brushes must not fraternize with the mud-brush, the dusting-brush, the paste-brushes or rags.

The workman who takes a pride in his tools may be relied on to take a pride in his work. You will never get your boots better cleaned than by a Greek shoeblack. The *loustros* is kept very busy, for the streets are very muddy on wet days, and very dusty on fine ones, and

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Street and Wayside Scenes

the townspeople who have adopted the Western style of footgear have a decided taste for clean-looking boots and shoes. Moreover, the *loustros* acts in the same capacity as our district messenger boys, and he is equally reliable. If you entrust him with a letter or a parcel you may rest assured that it will be carried speedily and safely to its destination.

The itinerant greengrocer is also a common sight. He, too, is often a boy, and it does not matter how small he is so long as he can count the bigger varieties of fruit and vegetables, weigh out the smaller kinds, and see that he gets his right money ; for he has no clumsy barrow to trundle, no heavily laden baskets to carry on his arms. By his side walks a donkey laden with panniers of grapes, oranges, figs, or maybe a selection of field and vineyard produce, and the sturdy little beast of burden even takes the scales on his back.

The nut-vendor is another celebrity of the streets and squares. His stall is a large wooden tray on a barrow. Shelled nuts of various kinds are assorted in rows and piles on the tray. By the side of the stall stands a stove for roasting the kernels for such customers as prefer them served cooked, either hot or cold. A favourite variety of nut sold quite cheaply at this stall, raw and cooked, is the soft green-coloured, delicately flavoured nut of the pistachio-tree.

The nut-hawker is not the only street cook. He has a companion in the man or woman who toasts golden shafts of maize by a patch of glowing embers.

The water-seller of Athens is also a prominent figure. With his large, gracefully shaped amphora on his shoulder, he makes a very pretty picture.

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The scenes I have described to you are characteristic of town life in Greece, but you must not forget that most of the people here live a country life. Apart from Athens and a few busy commercial ports, of which more anon, the chief centres of any sort of society whatsoever are little villages dotted along the coast or scattered among the mountains.

At a seaside village you may often watch a boat set sail on a fishing expedition. Here is a peep at such a scene. A very little craft is manned by father, eldest son of about fifteen, and his younger brother, who is not more than twelve. They have "an extra hand" with them—baby brother, who may be six, but looks nearer five.

Look at the size of the boat, the combined "strength" of the crew, the unpretentious fishing apparatus. They do not make you think of a profitable haul to be brought home for sale in a busy market, do they?

I could have taken you to a port, and shown you some fishing-smacks going out or coming home, but the little scene I have chosen in preference will give you a far better idea of the fishing resources of Greece. The Greek fisheries, as a whole, do not yield enough for home needs. A local haul may be heavy enough to allow of a surplus being taken to the nearest inland hamlet, or good enough to be sent to Athens, but more often it is only fit and sufficient for the fisherman, his family, and a few neighbouring customers.

Nevertheless, the sea yields Greece one profitable harvest—bath sponges. When you sail the limpid blue Greek seas on a sunny day you look beneath their surface at hundreds upon hundreds of sponge patches of all sizes,

Street and Wayside Scenes

from very little to very big. The beautiful soft-looking masses of delicate unburnished gold beneath the sparkling waters make you feel that if you dived off the side of your boat you would immediately be plunged into a most glorious water-lily fairyland.

In the rough cuttings that serve as streets in the mountain villages you often meet a peasant-woman spinning as she goes. She has been shopping, as you see from the bag on her arm, or her back is bowed beneath a cumbersome load of faggots that she has been collecting on the hillside. During the journey to and fro she must needs ply her old-fashioned distaff, for she is the wife of a poor peasant, and she must help him toil for a very bare living. The wool she is spinning comes off the backs of the few sheep they own, and it is an important contribution to their means of livelihood. A family group weaving at a loom is also a common village-street sight.

The plains of Greece are practically deserted, except by the crops, for long hours at a time, long periods at a stretch; but in the harvest season they buzz and hum with the business and pleasure of life. To these plains let us now set our faces, to watch them producing the one crop on which half Greece depends for a living, and on which the whole world depends for a very favourite form of food.

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CHAPTER XII

CURRANT LAND

“ALL the currants in all the Christmas puddings I have ever eaten came from Greece.”

Every boy and girl, every man and woman, in this country can say that and speak the truth. Are you not already thinking to yourself: “What an enormous number of currants must grow there!”

But I have not yet told you the whole truth. I thought you would grasp its meaning better if I broke it to you a little gently. The fact of the matter is that, with the exception of a few tons of currants grown in Australia for home use, all the currants eaten by all the world, day after day, year in and year out, come from Greece, and have come from there ever since the fruit has been known.

Currants are the sun-dried forms of little seedless grapes which were originally discovered growing around Corinth. To distinguish these grapes from other varieties, they were first called “Corinths.” You can easily hear how the word came to be commonly pronounced in the way with which you are so familiar.

The exact date of the discovery of currants is not on record, so far as I can find out after careful inquiry; but it must have been nearly a hundred years ago at least, for I have seen an old record of the quantity of currants exported by Greece, and the first entry in it was for the year 1816. These earliest statistics ever kept of the trade were entered in this book by an English merchant. It

Currant Land

has been kept up to date since then by his descendants, who have carried on his business. It was shown me by one of them—a leading currant merchant of Patras—with the remark : “ The Greeks are no statisticians. When they want facts and figures about their currant trade, they come to the English growers and traders, and they have to come to this old book to make any far-back references.”

I am going to give you a rough summary of what I learnt from that book, to show you how the fruit has crept into popularity by leaps and bounds. In 1816 England purchased 1,572 tons of currants ; she now buys about 70,000 tons annually. From 1816 to 1819 the yearly average of all the currants grown in Greece was from 9,000 to 10,000 tons ; last year the currant-crop was estimated at 180,000 tons !

Currants are the most obstinate of all the fruits of the earth. They absolutely refuse to grow unless they are planted where they fancy, and exactly what they want in the way of nourishment no one has yet been able to find out. They will flourish in one spot, run to seed in another a stone's-throw away, and stubbornly resist every effort to make them take root a stone's-throw away from that. The Greeks found out two of their vagaries after paying for the revelations with many barren vineyards—they will only grow near the sea, and it is hopeless to plant them above a height of two thousand feet. But they are by no means to be relied on when indulged in these fancies. To tell the plain truth, no one has ever been able to be sure when he planted a currant vineyard that it was going to pay him for his trouble. Only by experiments, often costing very dear, have the currant-loving districts been located.

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Experimental planting was tried in many lands, but for nearly a century currants could not be induced to grow anywhere outside their native country, and not in all parts of that ; so it came to pass that Greece found herself in possession of what seemed for long years a special gift bestowed on her by Nature. It was only quite recently that the unpleasant surprise was sprung on Greece that the little fruit was consenting to grow in parts of Australia. But currant-growing is still in its infancy in our colony, which cannot yet produce a sufficient quantity of the fruit for her own needs. She is still a customer for Greek currants, and it is still to Greece that the world, as customer, has to take all her demands for this fruit.

Currants dominate the prosperity of Greece. They are her main source of wealth, making up one-half of the total value of her exports. They have given rise to flourishing manufactures in connection with the trade. Directly they affect a large proportion of the population, for the vineyards are not the property of a few rich landowners, but are split up among a great number of moderately well-to-do peasant proprietors ; indirectly they affect the whole country through the large share of profits on the trade paid as export duty into the national exchequer. Little wonder that all Greece takes a highly excited interest in the currant harvest, and that half the population tend currants, talk currants, think currants, dream currants from one year's end to another.

The currant vineyards of Greece are all in the south of the country. They make a margin round the coast from Corinth to Kalamata, via Patras, and cover part of the small plains in the islands of Zante and Cephalonia

Currant Land

close by. The vines are richly productive, but their cultivation is a matter of considerable trouble and expense.

In January the vines must be pruned.

In February the vineyards are hoed over, the soil is piled up into hillocks, and a trench is dug round each vine, so that it may get the full benefit of any rain that may fall.

In March the vineyards are levelled, and now follows a very busy time. There are two microbes which are bitter foes of the currant-vines, by name *Peronosporos* and *Oidium*. To guard against the deadly onslaught of *Peronosporos* the vines have to be well sprayed with a solution of sulphate of copper and lime; to ward off *Oidium* they must all be well dosed with sulphur. During the process of the sulphur treatment the vineyards are the scene of a most odd-looking performance. Numbers of men, each armed with a little pair of bellows, take possession of them, and as they walk about busily blowing, out from the bellows fly showers of sulphur over the vines.

In May, when the fruit is set, the work of "ring-cutting" begins. With a knife that looks like a miniature fag-hook an incision is made round the bark of each vine, to prevent the sap running down. By this means moisture is thrown up into the fruit, which would otherwise be very much smaller than the tiny little currants as you know them.

After ring-cutting comes the business of thinning out the leaves, for even under the blazing sky overhead the fruit would not ripen to perfection if it were allowed to remain hidden away amongst the very thick foliage

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Currant-vines grow in bush form. The bushes, now fully developed, rise only about 3 feet from the dusty ground, and all their branches are heavily laden with tightly packed bunches, many quite 10 inches long. Naturally the dwarf vines want help in supporting such gigantic weights, so here, there, and everywhere they have to be propped up with little canes. After which, for the next few weeks, the burning summer sun of Greece is the chief labourer in the vineyards.

The last week of July finds Nature presenting the magnificent spectacle of the vineyards ripe for harvest. Here is a typical "currant-show." Picture a vast amphitheatre spanning a long line of the sea, with an auditorium of the wildest mountains and an arena of luxuriously fertile plains. Cast your eye over the vineyards. What countless clusters of grapes crowd that one glance! Watch the sun-rays peering into the depths of the leaves, and discovering more, more, and ever more masses of cluster-grapes. Now look up at the desert mountains. In all the wide landscape bounded by your horizon there is not a soul in sight. Presently you spy a few little houses looking down at you over a precipice; far away to the right a few more poor-looking cottages burrowing in the bosom of a hill; a long, long way to the left a few more straggling hovels sleeping under the shadow of a rock. Are you not wondering whether these scattered villages can possibly be hiding enough people to pick the myriad bunches of currant-grapes in time to prevent the fruit rotting where it hangs? Anyway, it must be quite time the pickers were beginning their work! It is time, and in a day or two they will be trooping down the sterile mountain-sides to reap the rich harvest of the plains.



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Currant Land

CHAPTER XIII

CURRENT LAND (*continued*)

THE peasants of each village come down from the mountains in a band, under the charge of a head-man. They collect in the market-place or café square of some central, civilized quarter in the neighbourhood of the plains, whither come the vineyard proprietors who require pickers. Here they are engaged in batches through their leader.

The smaller peasant proprietors gather in their own harvest, with the help of their family; so in the little vineyards you see boys and girls helping father and mother pick grapes. But children are not hired by employers of labour, who demand highly skilled workers; for if their fruit is not carefully picked, the crop will be less profitable. Some of the hidden bunches cannot ripen till the vines have been partially despoiled, and these must be left for a second or even third picking-over of the vineyards. As the unpractised eye gets dimmed by the continuous glare of the sun, the inexperienced hand of the most conscientious child-picker is tempted to gather unripe fruit.

Harvest begins about August 1. As the grapes are gathered they are put into baskets. The piled-up baskets are shouldered by men and women, who carry them to the drying-ground, where the grapes will soon assume that blue-black disguise under which you know them full well by the name of currants.

There is nothing artificial in the preparation of cur-

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rants. The grapes are spread out either on wooden trays or on a bare patch of ground, and dried wholly by the sun. The trays are one of the very few signs that Greece has ever heard of any improvements being made in agricultural implements and appliances since the long-ago days of their illustrious ancestors ! Cheap contrivances as they are for guarding against the damage and consequent loss incurred by a shower of rain falling on the drying currants, these trays are only used by the more advanced proprietors of the bigger vineyards. At night they are stacked up into piles, each pile being roofed with a gabled wooden covering.

But in many of the vineyards the fruit is spread out to dry on Mother Earth in long, narrow strips. Each strip has its canvas covering a few inches above the ground, all ready to be run along a central pole and pegged down. The covering is always spread and secured in this way at nights, so that the plains are then dotted over with dwarf tents, which make them look like the camping-ground of a Liliputian army. But so primitive are the conditions of labour in Greece that the canvas used is not even proper tarpaulin, so if there should be a very heavy downpour the currant-tents soon get saturated, and the fruit suffers badly in consequence.

In fine weather the fruit dries in about eight days. The currants are now flicked with little brooms to detach them from the main stems. They are next passed through a winnowing-machine, from which they emerge each still clinging to its own little stalk. Winnowing is the last stage to which the business of currant production is carried on in the vineyards, and four-fifths

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of the whole crop are shipped abroad for domestic service in this condition.

The harvesters have a very long working-day of about fourteen hours—from sunrise to sunset—but they are allowed an interval of about three hours in the middle of the day, when the intense heat compels a total cessation of work throughout the country. From noon till three in the afternoon all the shops are closed in the towns, and out of doors is all deserted for the coolest corners that can be found within the shelter of closely shuttered houses. But although the peasants in the vineyards are free to rest from their labours, there are no houses near in which they can seek shade ; so they sit down on the ground, have a simple meal of dry bread, fruit, and a little wine, and then, falling naturally into some graceful posture, hide their eyes, and indulge in a siesta.

After the day's work is done they dance till midnight. By " dancing " you must understand that two men each hold an end of a pocket-handkerchief, and more men join up hands in a row to one of them. The last of these holds another pocket-handkerchief by one end, and, whilst a woman takes another end of it with one hand, more women join up hands in a row to her. The line of dancers bends into a semicircle ; then, chanting a melancholy folk-story, they play a game of " Follow my leader," with slow and stately steps round and round, and he breaks the monotony a little by gyrating under the handkerchief held up with his second-in-command. When the end of one dirge is reached, the peasants have a choice of about thirty other equally popular and equally long folk-stories to process to in the same way.

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At the close of the evening's entertainment the pickers go to sleep for the night. Two or three may find shelter under a tree here and there, a few may seek the hospitality of a rustic store-hutch, open to the front and one side, enclosed with a back-wall and one side-wall of trellised vine-branches, and thatched with an "open roof" of vine-leaves; but there is not very much room to lie down among the baskets and brooms. Most of them throw themselves down to slumber peacefully somewhere, anywhere, beneath the open sky.

After the harvest has been gathered in, and the sun has dried all the fruit, there follow the bustle and excitement of selling the crop. Everyone wants to get rid of his currants as quickly as possible, for there is no storage accommodation for them in the near neighbourhood of the vineyards.

Here is a peasant getting ready to take his currants for sale to the nearest market. He packs them in panniers and sacks, saddles his mules, and loads up for the journey. Each mule can carry a total weight of from two hundred to three hundred pounds, and as our peasant friend is only a small proprietor, his crop weighs about two tons; so he sets out with a procession of twenty mules. But you can hardly see the little beasts. Each has piled-up panniers and bulging saddle-bags hung all over his back, and an odd fat sack is strapped on to the saddle. With the peasant are his wife, one or two of their sons, and possibly a hired help, all going to lend a hand in unloading.

Directly to the merchants, or indirectly to them through a middleman, the greater part of the currant crop of Greece is disposed of within the course of a few

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days after harvest-close. The fruit has now to be transferred to the warehouses, which are in the four great centres of the currant export trade—Corinth, Vostitza, and Patras, on the Gulf of Corinth, for the currants grown in the surrounding districts, which produce the finest quality fruit; and Kalamata, on the Gulf of Messenia, in the far south, where the crops are most abundant.

Most of the currants are conveyed from the provincial ports to the export centres in gaily-coloured boats, in shape rather like a Chinese junk. They are shot loose into the hold, and when the boats reach their destination the cargo is discharged by being shovelled out with wooden spades into sacks and baskets. Some of the currants come up from the country in long, narrow carts drawn by mules. This, too, is a picturesque mode of transport, for the carts are often brightly painted, and the mules have their heads decorated with gorgeous bead-trappings.

CHAPTER XIV

CURRENT LAND (*continued*)

HERE is a glimpse of the commercial scene on the quay of the important currant port of Patras during the busy export month of September. The wharf is thick with black "mud"—a sticky mass of currants piled up by overflowing sacks and barrows, and stamped down by the press of feet. Backwards and forwards, in and out, and round about stacks of packing-cases, moves a constant

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stream of men, trundling currant-laden barrows up to the weighing-machines, carrying sacks of currants into the warehouses, bringing out big boxes of currants, carting great packages of currants down to the quay. And what a hubbub ! Men shouting, hammers banging, chains clanking, weights jangling, and a hundred and one other noises warring in a fierce conflict to make themselves heard loudest amid the din.

Let us go into one of the warehouses. Just as life seemed all a matter of currants on the quay without, here within life seems to insist that there is nothing of interest in the world except currants. The ground-floor is occupied by numbers of blue-black hills and mounds ; so is the floor above, and the floor above that. Here, there, and everywhere people are doing something with currants, talking about currants the while ; and machinery is roaring “ currants ” from top to bottom, from end to end of the building, where a host of men, women, and girls are industriously and dexterously helping to sort, clean, and pack.

As the currants are “ weighed in ” to the warehouses they are allotted a temporary resting-place according to quality. They are next sorted into three sizes by sieve-fitted machines. They used only to be separated into two sizes. The smallest ones came to be singled out into a class of their own as currant-bread grew popular. The smaller the currants, the more to the pound for the baker, you see, and several little ones make a much better show for the price of a loaf than do a few big ones !

About one-fifth of the national currant crop is cleaned in the warehouses by a patent process. A machine is fed by currants from a cage at one end ; on a network tray

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in its middle they dance up and down for a few minutes, to shake themselves free of their little stalks and any impurities they may have collected during their journey from the vineyards; then, when they are thoroughly clean, they drop out of the other end into a trough.

The other four-fifths of the currants exported leave the warehouses in the winnow-cleaned state in which they came there from the vineyards, plus the dust and dirt they have picked up on their journey. Some of these are cleaned by the import merchants; others are sold without further ado, in which case they will always be found clinging to their tiny stalks, as a reminder to cook that they must be well bathed in a cullender before being fit to enter a pudding or cake.

Winnowed currants are mostly packed in barrels, for which Germany, Holland, and America are the best customers. America is the largest purchaser of these, as she prefers to clean all currants for her own use.

The cleaned currants—it is always wise to wash them!—are packed loose in wooden cases, which are labelled with such alluring titles as “Fancy Cleaned Currants,” “Cleaned Currants—Climax.” These catchwords are frequently stencilled in plain English, because the cases of cleaned fruit are bought up so largely by England and her Colonies. Other excellent customers for them are Holland, Germany, Canada, and Australia.

Large quantities of cleaned currants are also put up in pound-sized cartons, and this method of packing gives employment to numbers of women and girl factory-hands. The packers work in sets of three, standing at a long table bordered with troughs of cleaned currants, and strewn with scales, piles of grease-proof paper, metal funnels, and

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coloured cartons. A "hand" fastens up one end of a carton, and wraps a sheet of grease-proof paper over the square body of a funnel, which she places within the cardboard box. The body of the funnel exactly fits the body of the box, but its little round neck stretches up and out to a wide-open mouth above the open top of the carton. At this stage of the proceedings the carton is handed to a companion, who scoops up currants from a trough by her side, shoots them down the funnel, and withdraws the latter, handing an overflowing box to the third member of the group in which she is working. Number three places the box on a pound-weighted pair of scales, throws redundant currants back into the trough till the scales balance evenly, and then closes up the carton. These pound cartons are packed in sets of thirty-six into wooden cases by men-packers, who do all the heavier warehouse work. The best customers for the ready-cleaned, ready-weighed currants are Canada and Australia; for, as these Colonies of ours suffer severely from a dearth of servants, they appreciate any domestic labour-saving device.

The country that imports the most currants in proportion to her population is Holland; but the national customer who purchases the greatest bulk of the fruit, cleaned and uncleaned, is England, who annually takes about three-fifths of the total crop sold by Greece.

I have already roughly indicated to you how the currant harvest affects a large part of the peasant population of Greece, and how, indirectly, it affects the national prosperity of the whole country through the medium of taxation; but its influence is still farther-reaching than you guess. When the harvest is a good one, the doctors

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may hope to get their outstanding accounts settled ; when it is a poor one, the lawyers have to wait for their fees, and the tradesmen for their bills to be paid.

Yet, in spite of the fact that Greece depends on her currants as her main source of wealth, she treats them with scorn when it comes to a question of eating them herself. You will hardly believe me when I assure you that you might more reasonably expect to meet " Spotted Dick " at an English Royal dinner-party than to find a single currant in anything served at any meal in any class of Greek household. So struck was I by the way currants are conspicuous by their absence from the ingredients of everything in the national menu that one morning I explored Patras for the express purpose of seeing whether I could discover anyone who sold anything with currants in it. With the millions of currants of the year's harvest dogging my footsteps in the sticky mud that clung to my shoes as I crossed the quay, I started on my quest. Low and high I searched the town, through main-streets and side-turnings I wandered, peering into every possible and impossible shop. High and low I searched even more thoroughly on my circuitous way back to the quay, baffled into such a ridiculously thorough mood that once I suddenly became conscious that I was earnestly looking for buns in a linen-draper's window ! Just as I was being forced to the conclusion that Patras sold nothing whatever to eat with currants in it, I spied in a grimy little open window of a tiny side - street general stores some coarse parodies of halfpenny rolls with a few lost-stolen-or-strayed-looking currants diving into their midst.

Yet so prolific are the vineyards that Greece produces

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far more currants than she can sell. It is all very well for her to try hard, as she is doing, to persuade other nations to buy more of them, as there is no denying that they are the cheapest of all dried fruits, a very pleasing delicacy, and a most wholesome and nutritious form of food ; but surely it would be better for her own stomach's sake, as well as her pocket's sake, to say nothing of loyalty and the advertisement of example, if she began to eat some of her annual surplus of currants, instead of pulping the whole of the over-supply into syrup and raw spirit at a dead loss.

CHAPTER XV

NATIVE INDUSTRIES

Most of the industries of Greece are closely connected with agriculture. After currants, her most valuable crops are numerous other varieties of grapes—many, such as muscatels, of a fine quality—olives, tobacco, figs, and valonia, all of which figure prominently in her export trade.

From her grapes she makes wine, taking care not to put resin into any that is to be sold out of the country. Some, too, she dries into raisins ; and there are some of a long, white, seedless kind, a little larger than the currant-grapes, which are quite familiar to you in their dried condition under the name of sultanas. From her olives she manufactures oil. Her valonia, a species of acorn, is in great demand for tanning purposes on account of the tannin it contains.

Native Industries

Some of the most flourishing manufactures of the country owe their origin to the currant industry. Greece makes all her own packing-cases, from wood felled in Greek forests. She also manufactures all the coloured cartons for the pound packets of cleaned currants, and does all the printing on them of decorative trade-marks, special-brand names, and various devices calculated to win customers for the fruit packed by any particular merchant.

Some wool, cotton, and silk are also produced, but they do not constitute any considerable source of wealth. Rugs and silk scarves are the most characteristic native industries to which such commodities contribute. An effort is being made to revive the dying industry of embroidering, but the pioneer work in this direction is being carried on under great difficulties. Unfortunately, the women of the country who are not forced by circumstances to perform the coarser kinds of labour are taught to look upon any kind of work as beneath their dignity ; so, although it is a matter for regret, it is not a matter for wonder that Greece cannot boast of any flourishing fine-art branch of female labour.

There are two important native industries in connection with the home trade. The one is the making of boots and shoes, which are well cut and of good leather. Some are of the Western pattern, but the majority are the typically Greek red shoes with black pompons. The other articles made for home use are earthen amphoræ, or water-jugs. Near the spring at Amarousi, whence drinking-water is carried into Athens, there is a potters' field, where the work of moulding amphoræ is busily carried on. These jars are made from the same kind of red clay as was used to form the beautiful ancient Greek vases.

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Mining affords occupation to a small proportion of the population, and some of the ores found, notably lead and zinc, are exported. The emery mines of Naxos are valuable, and it is from this island in the Ægean Sea that we get emery-paper. One of the most important mining districts of Greece is at Laurium, a two and a half hours' train journey from Athens. Here a considerable number of ancient shafts have been found, and the mines now worked produce lead and galena (sulphide of lead), as well as some silver.

The most important non-metallic mineral is marble, in which Greece is remarkably rich. To the finely grained, beautifully veined marbles of this country we owe much of the beauty of old Greek buildings. As the chief material at the command of the ancient Greek builders, it was used unsparingly for all the most important works undertaken by them, and by reason of its solidity it influenced the whole style of Greek architecture by its natural tendency to demand purity of line. Several of the most important marble-quarries in Greece to-day were worked by the ancients, and it seems as though they could be worked for ever without their supply being exhausted.

The most beautiful of the Greek marbles is the fine-grained, pure white variety found in the island of Paros, whence it takes its name of Parian marble. The Pentelic marble of Mount Pentelicus is as white as the Parian, but it is of coarser grain. The bluish-white marble of Mount Hymettus is still quarried, and other marbles of various and variegated colours are obtained from many other districts in the mainland and islands.

In the olden days marble was laboriously hewn out of

Native Industries

the quarries by slaves, blasting not then being known. In some of the quarries you can still see the marks of the ancient tools. But go now to the large modern Greek quarries on Pentelicus, and what do you find? They are worked by a company, which run up their own train and trucks. The marble is blown up by dynamite. There is a specially constructed slide for the blocks to run down. The processes of chipping, cutting, smoothing, sawing, and polishing are scientifically carried on. The new methods are up-to-date, but no new quarrying methods could produce finer results than the very old ones of the ancient Greeks. The marble exported far and wide from the Greek quarries of to-day is very valuable, in that it is a source of wealth to Greece, but let us not be practical to the point of view of forgetting how still more valuable is the marble that came from those quarries in days gone by. To Greece the work of her old builders has made her old marble a priceless national asset. I wonder will anyone so labour with the new material that one day it, too, will be beyond money and beyond price?

CHAPTER XVI

FESTIVAL SCENES

IN Athens, on New Year's Day and Independence Day, March 25, the King, Queen, and Royal Family attend a Thanksgiving Service at the cathedral. They drive in state from the Royal Palace, and are the central figures of a very brilliant spectacle. The King's coach-

Greece

men are resplendent in blue and silver livery, the officers' uniforms colour the picture with bright splashes of scarlet, and the blue and white feathers of the gracefully nodding plumes on the full-dress helmets contribute liberally to the colour and movement of the whole stirring scene.

When Athens keeps Carnival she appears to change into fancy dress, and to adapt herself to the strange conditions of an organized fête. As a matter of fact, it is then that she casts aside a borrowed civilization, and becomes more like her natural, national self. Now you see children in the national Greek dress, and their nurses in native costume. The Greek national dress is, as I have told you, always a close adaptation of the Albanian ; but numerous are the costumes of the Greek islands, and nurse may be arrayed in any gorgeous attire which happens to be typical of home to her. A feature of the Carnival is a performing camel, whose entry on to any part of the scenes is announced by the merry clatter of a tambourine. What matter if this frolicsome beast is stuffed with men who control his antics ? He is a dear, funny beast, whatever is inside him, and the children love him. "Dance, camel, and I will give you apples !" they sing to him ; and they feed him with pennies.

Megara, within easy reach of Athens, is famous for the dancing that takes place there on the hill and in the market-square every Easter Tuesday. This dancing is very much like that which I described to you as taking place in the currant vineyards at the close of the day's work, only the Megarans are professional dancers as compared with other Greek peasants who indulge in the pastime.

Festival Scenes

Easter Tuesday is the day of days for the marriageable village maidens of Megara, for it is then that they dance for a husband! Each girl dresses herself for the occasion in a handsomely embroidered costume, and puts on a gold-edged gauze veil; but, however gorgeous her raiment, however irresistible her natural beauty, the charm to which she pins all her faith is the chain-dowry of solid gold coins which she puts round her neck and in her hair. For generation after generation that dowry has been handed down from mother to daughter, gradually increasing in value as from time to time enough money has been saved to change into another gold coin to add to necklace or fillet.

As the maidens dance the men watch them, each intently looking for the one that shall take his fancy. When any one of the men makes his momentous decision he signifies the same by throwing his handkerchief on the maid he wishes to wed, and she is by custom bound to marry him.

An important part of the education of every Megaran girl is the training of her for her mating-dance. It so happened that, while I was in Athens, some little Megaran maidens gave a special rehearsal for my benefit.

I had expressed a wish to visit some one of the best girls' schools in the city. The Greek professor to whom I mentioned the matter arranged an introduction to a head-mistress, from whom I soon learnt that dancing was a prominent feature of the school curriculum, her pupils being taught by a famous professor who had written a book on the subject of Greek national dances. Would I like to see some of these dances? Naturally I was delighted at the prospect. A messenger was des-

Greece

patched to the roof of the school-house, where the children were having a game, and I was conducted to the playground leading out of the garden. Here in a few minutes the whole school was mustering to do me honour. Big girls, middle-sized girls, little girls, tiny tots, out they filed from under a veranda, each one coming out into the open looking still more shy than the one before. When they were all grouped before me we exchanged greetings, and the head-mistress then proceeded to single out about twenty girls. They joined up hands in a row to two specially selected leaders, who each held an end of a handkerchief. Twisting and turning under the handkerchief, the leaders corkscrewed round and round the playground, wailing the while a melancholy ditty, which was echoed by all the others faithfully corkscrewing in their very slow steps. One national dance after another they showed me, but all were very similar, and at the risk of sounding ungrateful and ungracious I must confess that the whole performance impressed me as being dreary and monotonous. The girls created by their voices and steps a perfect harmony. There was no suggestion of pose or affectation in their manner, and at first I felt the full charm of simplicity in their very graceful movements; but after a time I could not help regretting that their dancing did not seem to give them the slightest opportunity of expressing the joy of life.

The performance closed with an extra-special "turn." The head-mistress proudly informed me that among her pupils were some girls from Megara. They were going to show me the Easter Tuesday dance. It turned out to be similar to all the other Greek dances, in that it was a



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Festival Scenes

slow procession to a wailing accompaniment ; but the easy carriage, graceful movements, and light steps of the performers were particularly noticeable, and each girl's feet seemed to slip into well-defined positions of their own artistic accord. They were such pretty little Megaran maids who danced their best to give me pleasure. I wanted to kiss them all my thanks, and at the same moment I longed to beg Greece release them from the bonds of that social custom by which they were destined a few years later to dance for a home, and bound to take as husband any man who chose to throw his handkerchief on them. I left the playground with my heart full of good wishes for them that, when their Easter Tuesday came, luck would enchant the handkerchief that fell on each, so that they might all love and be loved, as well as mated, fed, clothed, and housed.

CHAPTER XVII

TRAVELLING IN GREECE

No line yet crosses the Turkish frontier to link Greece up with Europe by railroad. The railways of Greece are, however, being developed, and the main track and branch lines already opened in the Peloponnesus, or southern peninsula, give access to such historic spots and commercial centres as Athens, Eleusis, Megara, Corinth, Patras, Olympia, Kalamata, Mycenæ, Argos, Tiryns, and Nauplia. There are also two lines in Thessaly, and a few local railways.

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But do not imagine that wherever there are railways in Greece there are trains at your service. Expresses are rare luxuries, and frequently you are too late for the last of the two ordinary trains a day if you put off going to the station till the cool of the afternoon. My experience in picking up connections was that the service provided offered a choice between spending the night in the most primitive of inns and going on my way in the early hours of the next morning, or hurrying over an excursion, tripper fashion, and rushing back to the station in the hottest part of the day, as fast as my feet would carry me over stony mountains, so as to catch the only train back to the town which I had made my headquarters for the time being.

You can form a good idea of the accommodation available for a traveller stranded at a little place on the line if I describe a wayside station to you—a mere shed, opened for a few minutes once, or at the most twice, a day, when a train is signalled, by an official in his shirt-sleeves, who combines the duties of station-master, booking-clerk, ticket-collector, goods-clerk, porter, and general factotum. But his multifarious duties do not include any help to a traveller leaving or entering a railway-carriage. It is the passenger's own business to lift and carry anything and everything he chooses to keep with him as hand-luggage.

The first and second class railway-carriages are comfortable, but they could not be called luxurious. The third-class compartments! I do not want to exaggerate; they are not cattle-trucks: they are farmyards and bar-racks combined. The seats are generally packed with soldiers. In this part of the world soldiers always seem

Travelling in Greece

to be wandering about from place to place looking for their regiment. Sandwiched here and there between the military are peasant farmers and labourers, a few peasant women, and perhaps a priest. The floor is littered with bags of provisions, hampers and sacks of fruit and vegetables *en route* to market, someone's bird in a cage, and a baby or two. The rack overhead is crowded with live fowls tied together by the legs, and if you happen to stretch your cramped feet under the seat, there are chickens there to peck at you as a warning not to encroach again. The very long compartments have open partitions, so the men in the division at one end can easily talk to their friends in that at the other far end by shouting at the top of their voices, or the whole party in a compartment can join in dirging national ditties in the intervals of eating melons and strewing the pips on the floor. Well trained as I have been by third-class travelling in such countries as Italy, Sicily, and Spain, I found that a five or six hours' journey in a third-class Greek railway-carriage became in its last stages a sheer test of endurance.

But for all the little hardships, which, as they were prolonged, grew to assume the proportions of nerve-racking trials at the time of facing them, I shall again travel third class when next I go to Greece ; for when I am wandering I like to be in touch with the heart of a country I am in, and the heart of Greece is its peasant population. In travelling with the peasants I grew to know them more intimately than I should otherwise have done, and I long to meet again all the kind friends who shared their fruit with me, gave me flowers, put me in a corner seat, stood up to make more room for me, fetched

Greece

refreshments for me from the wayside-station stalls, and lifted my portmanteau in and out of the carriage. And particularly would I like to meet again the very polite "common" soldiers, more especially the kind soldier-man who was nearly left behind at a village station in his determined efforts to get me something to drink, who gallantly but shyly insisted on paying for the same out of his own poor pocket, who silenced his boon companions so that I might snatch a little sleep, of which I was sorely in need, and who, faithful to his voluntary promise, woke me up as I reached my destination. His method consisted in tapping my shoulder gently with the butt-end of his rifle.

Although it is possible to go by rail to many of the most interesting spots in Greece, there are very many famous places far away from any railroad yet laid or even projected. To some of the isolated localities you can drive, to others you must ride, and to most you have to walk part, if not all, the way. Good roads are few and far between. The highways are nearly all narrow, rough-hewn thoroughfares across the plains; the by-ways mere mule-tracks taking a short cut through the valleys, or zig-zagging for a long climb up the hills.

Sailing-boats and steamers ply between various places on the mainland coast and cross to the islands; and if you prefer to cover the whole distance between Patras and Athens by water rather than by land, you can do so by steamer to or from the Piræus, the port of Athens, in which case you will have the interesting experience of going through the Corinth Canal. Schemes for cutting through the isthmus of Corinth were projected by the ancients, and the first attempt to carry out the idea was

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made in the time of Nero, but the work was abandoned after a few months. The present canal was begun in 1881 by a French company, and finished by a Greek company ready for opening on August 6, 1893. It is $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, 100 feet wide, and 26 feet deep. The banks of the cutting rise about 160 feet above the water at their highest point, where the canal is spanned by a railway-bridge. Unfortunately, the width of the canal has proved insufficient for large steamers, so this short cut is only used by the smaller coasting-vessels.

To round off your general idea of what travelling in Greece is like, I must tell you about a voyage I made on a native steamer. But before doing so I must assure you that I did not view the experience through the jaundiced eyes of a bad sailor. The sea and I are the best of friends, both in sunshine and storm.

Here, then, is my experience of a night on a Greek steamer :

As I had made up my mind to travel in the native way in Greece, it was my duty to myself to go second class on the boat. Third class on the steamers is pure tramp travelling. It means sleeping with the cargo in the hold, and all the available space is generally occupied by itinerant Turks, such as you sometimes see wandering about in England with a pack of rugs and embroideries for sale. They cook their own food, and sleep in any hole or corner between the bales and boxes without taking off their clothes. But the average Greek does not travel in the hold ; he goes second class on the steamers. I meant to do the same. I went on board about nine at night, and asked for the second-class saloon. I was shown into a narrow passage littered from floor to

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ceiling with luggage—that is to say, the kind of luggage people have when they are shifting their entire abode, including household goods and live-stock. Jammed in between the goods and chattels was a long table—a bare board strewn with the débris of supper, odd fragments and chunks of black bread, lumps of sour-smelling goat's-milk cheese, grape-stalks, fig-skins, melon-rind, and piles of melon-pips. My one and only glance did not reveal a stool or a seat of any kind, but there were dozens of people sitting and reclining on bulging bags, huge sacks, and gaily-painted boxes. Some of the passengers were finishing their supper among the packages, babies were screaming, women chattering, parrots babbling, and the air was thick with smoke. I asked for the ladies' cabin, thinking my best plan was to retire for the night with the utmost speed. I was shown into a tiny cupboard, or, to tell the exact truth, I took a cautious peep in at the door. The scene that met my gaze beggars description. The outstanding feature was a dishevelled creature raising herself upon an elbow from a dirty-looking bunk, and leering at me with her one eye. I fled to the first-class part of the boat, settled up with the steward for the difference in the fare, and took a look round. Oh yes; there were seats here, cushioned sofas running round the saloon, but they were all occupied—fully occupied—by cockroaches! I thought it wiser to bear with the ills already facing me rather than step farther down into the bowels of the ship to sample the first-class ladies' cabin; so I took up a stool, shook off its present occupants, and sat down before a table. I tried to write, seeking oblivion in work, but of all the cockroaches I have ever met, my present shipmates were the most inquisitive.

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They walked over my paper, lodged on my pen, ran up my arms, and perched on my shoulders, till at last, in sheer desperation, I dropped my head on the table, hid my eyes, and, worn out by a very long day's rough walking, fell asleep.

Anyone who sets much store by comfort, and has ample means for indulging a craving for being as much "at home from home" as possible, can travel about Greece under more luxurious conditions than I have described. He can sail from port to port, from island to island, in his own yacht, or make one of a party sharing a specially chartered vessel. He can stay at one of the first-class cosmopolitan hotels in Athens, and he can make elaborate camping arrangements for penetrating the interior under the auspices of a first-class dragoman.

But the born wanderer, the real traveller, wants heart and soul to see a country under normal native conditions ; and as it was under such conditions that I thought you would best like to see Greece, I have not in any case made the road to its delights unnaturally easy for you.

Modern Greece has made good use of her independence in many ways. She has recognized the part played by education in the matter of progress, and so developed her scholastic system that she has the smallest illiterate populace in Eastern and Southern Europe ; she has built railways, made roads, established good postal and telegraphic communication, and organized a merchant fleet of considerable importance. But apart from her merchant service, the railways I have mentioned, and a few first-class hotels, her traffic arrangements are very primitive, the interior of the country in particular being in a most elementary stage of civilization. You must not

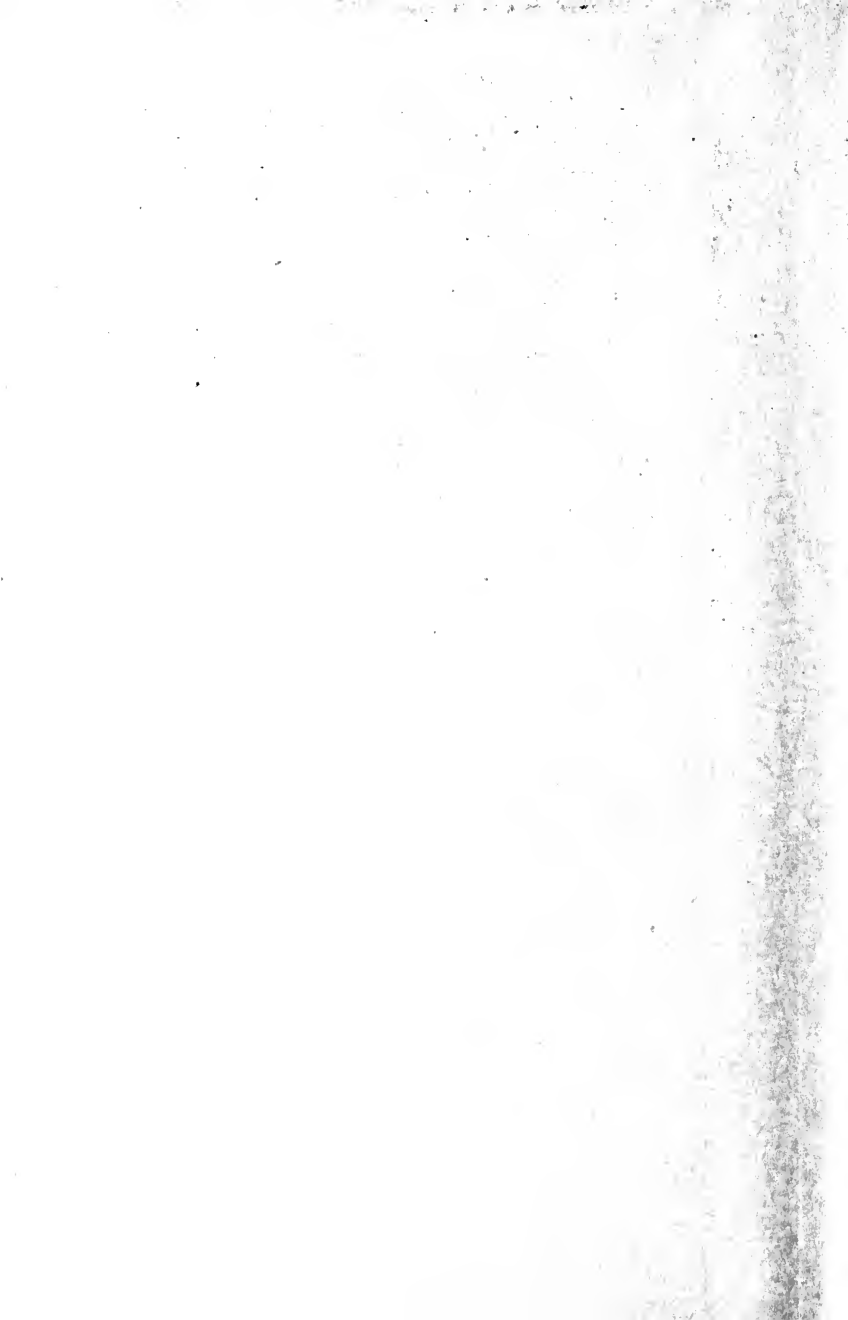
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forget, however, that Greece is a rugged, mountainous country, which naturally rebels against civilization, and that therein lies her power of fascination. To see her as she now is you must be prepared to "rough it," and when the way is made smoother she will have lost some of her natural beauty, much of her old-world charm.

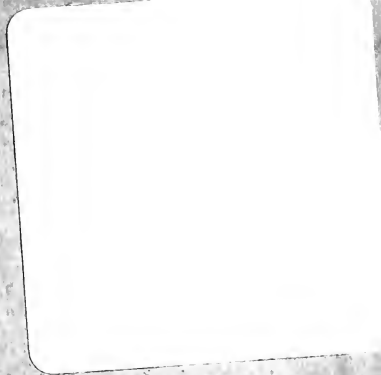
For any discomfort I had to put up with I was repaid a thousandfold by the wildly romantic, peacock-hued scenery; by the friendly manners, odd customs, and quaint costumes of the people; by the magnificent remains of ancient buildings that stand on classic soil amidst marvellous natural surroundings; and by the wondrous old art treasures that are housed in the homeland which gave birth to the life wherein they once played a part.

It may be my fault or your misfortune if this peep at Greece through my eyes has made you feel that you do not want to see her with your own eyes till she is tamed by roads, and there is a mountain railway to take you up Delphi; but if you are longing at any cost to see her for yourself just as she is to-day, then I have succeeded in the difficult task of doing her some justice, and that only by your help, by the sympathy between us which makes for understanding what words and pictures can never hope to express.

THE END



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